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ABSTRACT

This packet contains four sets of newsletters. Some of the topics covered in the Spring 1993 edition include the following: the rhetoric of crisis discredited, ethics in business-education partnerships, teaching about editorials, the politics of workplace literacy, women and literacy programs in Canada, and a list of resources on native literacy. The Summer 1993 issue includes information on the following: literacy and technology, portfolio assessment, the Gzowski tournament that raises money for Canadian literacy, teaching editorials, computer software for adults, and access to technology. In the Fall 1993 issue, the newsletter covers these topics: teamwork, partnerships, and quality in workplaces, in literacy, programs, and in schools; systems that work against literacy; how teamwork cuts both ways in the classroom; art and literacy in the classroom; total quality in community programs; and literacy and minority women. The final issue of the volume, Winter 1994, examines the following: new technologies in education as they relate to teacher education; layers of language, student writing on the family, numeracy and mathematical literacy, the Canada-wide mathematics test, and a list of resources on numeracy. All four of the issues contain news of conferences and meetings and all include "Media Focus," a supplement that includes reviews and articles about media and education. (KC)

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ED 378 362

Literacy across the Curriculum

Volume 9

Centre for Literacy
Montreal

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SPRING 1993 Vol. 9 No. 1

Literacy across the curriculum

including Medi Focus

Connecting literacy in the schools, community and workplace

The rhetoric of crisis discredited

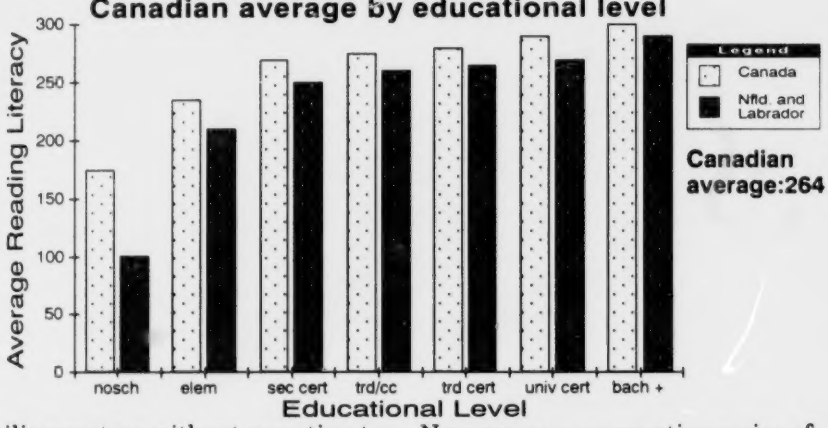
First the good news. The number of Canadian school drop-outs is not growing; and the levels of literacy and education are not falling [see BOX p.3]. Canadians are staying in school longer than ever. Drop-out rates have been skewed by shifting defintions of "drop-out" across the country and by failure to track students who return to school at later stages.

Now the bad news. From long habit, most politicians and policy-makers can only be moved by "Chicken-Little" scenarios — if a situation is not a crisis, it can be moved down or even off the agenda. Many groups have benefited by creating a sense of crisis. But in the long run, it is self-defeating. When a "crisis" does not respond to crisis-intervention, funders become disillusioned and look for a change of issues.

Educators now face the challenge of learning how to keep public policy focused on reform of an ailing system without resorting to crisis-mongering, and of how to discredit popular myths without making it appear that there is no problem at all.

Nowhere is this dilemma more evident than in the national preoccupation with literacy. Province by province, most literacy policy is being built on a quicksand of unfounded assumptions about the very nature of literacy, the causes of low levels of literacy, the ways adults learn, and the link between literacy and the economy.

Newfoundland and Labrador
reading literacy compared to
Canadian average by educational level



Canadian average:264

Now comes a provocative series of six research reports from Newfoundland which attempt to

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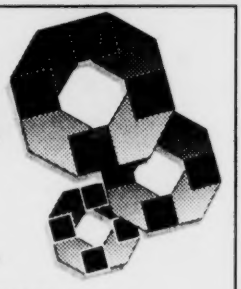
The Centre for Literacy Montreal, Quebec

Literacy Across the Curriculum



The Centre for Literacy
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Montreal, Quebec, Canada
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Editor: Linda Shohet

Layout: Pon©tu@t!on GRAFIX

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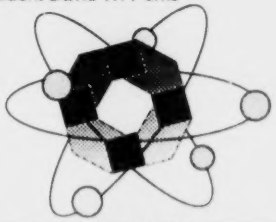
The Centre for Literacy/Le Centre d'Alphabétisation is a resource centre and teacher-training project designed to provide training, research, and information services which promote and link the advancement of literacy in the schools, the workplace and the community. The Centre gratefully acknowledges the support of the National Literacy Secretariat, Multiculturalism & Citizenship Canada and Dawson College.

President David W. Perks



Literacy for the 21st century

• Literacy encompasses a complex set of abilities to understand and use the dominant symbol systems of a culture for personal and community development. In a technological society, the concept of literacy is expanding to include the media and electronic text, in addition to alphabetic and number systems. These abilities vary in different social and cultural contexts according to need and demand. Individuals must be given life-long learning opportunities to move along a continuum that includes the reading and writing, critical understanding, and decision-making abilities they need in their community.

continued from page 1

look systematically at some of these questions. They find that many fondly-held assumptions about all of these issues are not borne out, at least in relation to their own province.

Newfoundland literacy

The 1989 StatsCan Survey of Literacy Skills found that Newfoundland and Labrador had the lowest levels of literacy in Canada by a significant margin [see graphs]. Researchers at Memorial University in St. John's undertook a series of studies to try to explain these levels and to examine the value that people attached to literacy.

Among their topics are the effects of literacy attainment on literacy practices, economic benefits, and perceptions of quality of life; the characteristic reading problems of adult illiterates; the perceived causes of literacy and illiteracy; and a study of students from low-income families.

In one of these studies, the researchers hypothesized five possible demographic factors that might have influenced Newfoundland literacy levels, including:

1. **The brain-drain factor**–Many of the better educated emigrate to other parts of Canada, lowering the average literacy level of those remaining.
2. **The age factor**–Newfoundland and Labrador instituted compulsory education later than other provinces, and did not enforce the law until the middle 1950s. Older residents would lower the overall literacy level. Younger individuals should have levels equal to the rest of the country.
3. **The rurality (sic) factor**–More of the population lives in rural areas where there are generally lower levels of literacy.
4. **The educational attainment factor**–Since educational attainment is assumed to be linked to literacy development the lower educational attainment in Newfoundland and Labrador would contribute to lower levels of literacy.
5. **The parents' education factor**–The educational attainment of the parents is believed to be a critical factor in literacy attainment. Again it is lower for Newfoundland and Labrador than elsewhere in Canada.

Using the 1989 StatsCan data, the researchers chose a sample to match the population of Newfoundland and Labrador as closely as possible. They took only Canadian-born, native speakers of English, for whom data on education and parents' education were available. They tested each hypothesis by determining the effect on literacy produced by each factor in question, then removing these effects and looking at the adjusted levels to see whether differences between the provinces remained. They also looked at the effect of all factors combined.

Unfounded assumptions

The results were unsettling. None of the factors alone or in combination significantly reduced the gap in literacy level between Newfoundland and Labrador and the other provinces. The factor that had most significance was brain-drain, since Newfoundlanders living elsewhere in Canada had

literacy levels on average for the country.

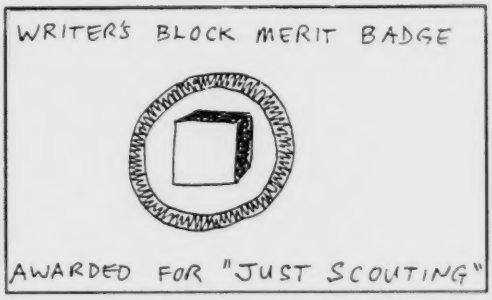
The researchers suggest that demographics cannot account for the lower than average reading levels in Newfoundland and Labrador, and speculate that the most critical factor might be a cultural value sytem which gives less value to literacy than is given in the rest of the country. They stress, however, that this is only speculation at this point.

These studies deserve closer scrutiny in their entirety. There are some problems in cross-referencing from one report to another.when one researcher uses the findings from a previous study to ground another study. At least twice I found statements that were not quite accurate, and in several instances, I did not think the data alone supported the conclusions.

The researchers also have an obvious political agenda beyond research. For example, a report titled "A Framework for the Evaluation of Adult Literacy Programmes" moves far beyond Newfoundland data and beyond research reporting. Without ever citing it, this report echoss the Good Practices policy document published in 1991 by the Movement for Canadian Literacy; it calls for the professionalization of literacy practice and the disappearance of volunteer tutoring as it now exists.

Overall, these researchers are to be congratulated for questioning popular beliefs and perceptions that are used to justify policy and funding. This type of research needs to be undertaken in multiple settings. If the conclusions at Memorial are valid for their own milieu, it means that much current social and education policy in Newfoundland has to be reconsidered.

There is no doubt that some of the methods and instruments developed there could be adapted for use elsewhere. We have to test assumptions in different locales and identify patterns of response if we hope to maintain pressure on policy-makers that takes us beyond the rhetoric of crisis to more coherent long-term education and social policy. *Summary Reports of Paths to Literacy and Illiteracy in Newfoundland and Labrador*, edited by Linda M. Phillips and Stephen P. Norris, Memorial University, St. John's, Newfoundland, 1992. These reports may be ordered from the editors at Memorial University, Faculty of Education, St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada A1B 3X8. Tel: (709) 737-8693; Fax: (719) 717-2345; Telex: 016-4101.



by Tim Flower
Reprinted with permission from *Writing on the edge*, Vol. 4, No 1, Fall 1992, p. 3

Canadians staying in school longer

Taking into account all forms of post-secondary courses, the education of Canadians has reached an historic high, StatsCan said. By 1991, more than 43 per cent had more than a high school diploma, compared with 38 per cent 10 years earlier.

Graduates with trade certificates increased by 15 per cent to 2.3 million, while those with other types of post-secondary certificates rose 47 per cent to 2.5 million.

And even though the number of Canadians of high school and university age decreased, the proportion staying at the books rose to 80 per cent from 66 per cent, reflecting the dismal propects of employment among the young and the demand for training and skills by prospective employers, StatsCan said.

"We're becoming better educated: StatsCan," *The Gazette*, (May 12, 1993) B1.

4 TO PONDER

1 On job-performance and school

McDermott and Goldman(1987) provide a work-related example of the benefits of assuming that all people can learn to read and write, given the need and the support. They describe their encounters with a group of New York City men who needed to pass a licensing exam. These ninety men were pest exterminators for the city's public housing units, and half of the group had only a conditional license. This meant lessened job security, lower pay, and zero access to promotions and extra jobs. To be licensed these men had to pass what amounted to a literacy test using job-related materials and a test of factual knowledge of exterminating. The word on the tests was that they were tough. In fact, some men had been on the job for twenty-five years without even attempting the licensing exam, and others had been thwarted by not being able to fill out complex preliminary forms.

"The specter of failure loomed," say McDermott and Goldman, "where it did not need to exist," and they describe how McDermott and David Harman set about organizing an instructional program and designing it for success rather than failure. They began with the assumption that "all the men knew more than they needed to know for passing the test, and that we had only to tame their knowledge into a form that would enable them to take and pass the test." They arranged peer teaching situations by pairing a group of ten students with two exterminator/ instructors who had already passed the exam, and they also relied on the union's promise to provide whatever instruction was needed until everybody passed. McDermott and Goldman report that most men passed the test on their first try, and all passed on the second time around. "A tremendous spirit and confidence grew among both students and teachers," they say, "and the union went to its next bargaining table with the claim that they were all licensed professionals." McDermott and Goldman also raise some questions worth considering: "Why is it that school degrees and literacy tests are the measures of our workers? Whatever happened to job performance?"

Glynda Hull, *Hearing Other Voices: A Critical Assessment of Popular Views on Literacy and Work*, Paper for the National Center for Research in Vocational Education, University of California at Berkeley, (November 1991):14-15.

2 On minority education and literacy

Minority children receive inferior education also through what occurs inside the schools, inside individual classrooms. Among the mechanisms discovered to affect minority education adversely, none is more important than teachers' low expectations. So, also, too many minority children are treated as having educational "handicaps." A disproportionate number are channeled into "special education," a pseudonym for inferior education. Problems that arise from cultural and language differences are inadequately attended to. The failure of school personnel to understand the cultural behaviors of minority children often results in conflicts that affect the children's obligation to adjust and learn. While minority children have an obligation to understand and relate to the culture and language of the schools, this is a two-way thoroughfare.

John U. Ogbu, "Minority Status and Literacy in Comparative Perspective," Literacy in America, *Daedalus*, (Spring 1990):156.

Classroom commercials: taking a vote

Pro

ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR OF RESOLUTION THAT OPPOSES ADVERTISING IN THE CLASSROOM

When students are required to watch television programs that include advertising, they become a captive audience for commercial interests. This intrusion on the educational process is aggravated when educators enter into a contractual agreement, as in the case of Channel One, which makes viewing of commercials mandatory and enforced by classroom teachers. The fact that schools receive material benefits, such as television sets, in exchange for viewing of commercials gives the contract the character of a bribe. It is true that commercial interests often have other ways of establishing a presence in schools-e.g., school-business partnerships and instructional use of magazines that include ads. But these do not involve the mandating of exposure to commercial messages, nor do they involve the powerful persuasive devices used in television advertising. Moreover, this resolution does not speak against all conceivable business-school partnerships. It focuses solely on opposition to legitimizing the forced viewing of TV commercials in classrooms. NCTE members should support it.

In Canada, the controversy over commercial advertising in the classroom has so far kept Youth News Network from winning enough school board contracts to begin telecasting. In the United States, Channel One has been operating for three years and is now in place in 12,000 schools. But debate has not slackened, and some major educational organizations are still actively lobbying against classroom commercials.

The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) has circulated the following mail ballot to its members for a vote by July 1, 1993. The positions are succinct statements of the arguments generally raised.

Resolution from National Council of Teachers of English NCTE Spring 1993

RESOLVED,

- that the National Council of Teachers of English oppose intrusions of commercial television advertising, such as Channel One, in the classroom;
- that NCTE seek alliances with other educational and consumer groups opposing intrusions of commercial television advertising in the classroom;
- that NCTE urge schools not to adopt programs or renew contracts involving use of materials that include mandatory exposure of students to commer cial television advertising; and
- that NCTE encourage teachers and others to take appropriate counter measures to resist intrusions of commercial television advertising in the classrooms and assist them in their efforts.

Note: The NCTE Executive Committee recommends approval of this position statement.

Con

ARGUMENTS AGAINST RESOLUTION THAT OPPOSES ADVERTISING IN THE CLASSROOM

The teacher, not the presence of TV or the viewing of commercials, makes the difference in instruction. Commercially-sponsored efforts like Channel One, if used intelligently, can be a tool for providing students with news and features on important topics–e.g., environmental problems, election issues, AIDS education–in a visually interesting, well produced format. Brief advertisements can be effectively ignored, or even analyzed as examples of propaganda techniques. Furthermore, opposition to TV ads in the classroom might be construed as a generally negative stand on school cooperation with profit-making groups. This could damage valuable school-business partnerships. Opposition to Channel One in particular can be harmful to poorer districts which receive television sets they could not otherwise afford. Schools which make use of Channel One can, moreover, opt out at a later date and keep the equipment. In the interest of the broad needs of students and schools, NCTE members should vote against the resolution that opposes TV advertising in the classroom.

Ethical guidelines for business-education partnerships

Business-education partnerships are being touted in some quarters as the educational panacea for the 1990s. Business is supposed to finance programs that the public sector can no longer support and at the same time help schools better prepare students for the workplace of tomorrow. [See BOX]

An ideological battle is shaping up over these partnerships. Ranged at one extreme are those who believe that schools should be run on the principles of free enterprise, or should actually become free enterprises in a competitive market. On the other side are those who believe in education as a public trust and a human right which can only be guaranteed by government. In between are those who believe it possible to form partnerships in which educational values are not compromised and school autonomy not threatened.

Regardless of proselytizing on either side, these partnerships will increase in the 1990s. Yet there are no general principles available to help schools decide on the pedagogical or ethical value of particular partnerships, nor are there guidelines on possible conflict of interest when school personnel become involved as advisors to their business partners.

Youth News Network (YNN) has provided a charged case study for considering this issue.

A case study: Youth News Network

Youth News Network, modelled on the U.S. Channel One, hit the Canadian educational establishment in 1990 with an offer to equip Canadian schools with television monitors, VCRs, and satellite dishes in return for a 12-minute daily "newscast," including 2½ minutes of paid advertisements. YNN has galvanized and polarized groups of people across Canada as few other issues in education ever have, prompting hundreds of newspaper stories, radio and television spots, and public meetings. Most have focused on television or advertising in the classroom, some on corporate sponsorship. None has looked closely at the involvement of school board personnel in corporate initiatives, or defined the boundaries of ethical involvement.

While YNN can be challenged on many fronts, including the degree of their corporate support, the pedagogical value of their programming, and the actual dollar value of the equipment being offered, this article will concentrate on the involvement of working teachers and consultants as "advisors" to the project. There are questions about promises of remuneration and about use of educators as "fronts" to give an illusion of pedagogical legitimacy.

Evolution of an advisory council

An Educational Advisory Council to YNN was first formed in the fall of 1991. It was to be comprised of fourteen to sixteen working teachers and consultants divided equally from Quebec and Ontario, meeting once a month on Saturdays for the first year. A copy of the minutes of September 28, 1991, showed that YNN president Rod MacDonald "suggested a remuneration of four hundred dollars a month plus expenses" for council members.

In fact, no member of that committee ever received any remuneration, not even expenses, and the monthly meetings did not materialize after November 1991. According to Sherrill Douglas, a media consultant with the Laurenval School Board (Quebec) and the recording secretary of the advisory council, the issue of conflict of interest did not arise at any meeting she attended. However, she believes that the YNN executive eventually decided that a new national council being formed in 1993 would be offered only reimbursement of expenses.

Council chair Scott Conrod,who is the Director-General of the Laurenval Board, confirms that when he became chair in fall of 1992, he recommended to YNN that they not pay the council members. He sees this as an advisory body to make recommendations. However, recognizing the expertise of council members, he has asked YNN to set

BOX

Business-education partnerships in a nutshell

David Allnutt, founder of the non-profit Canadian Corporate-Higher Education Forum which promotes post-secondary business-education partnerships, recently wrote an overview of the history and benefits of these partnerships. Allnutt divides them into three broad categories of educational activity. He cites financial contributions from companies, usually at the post-secondary level, short-term local projects, and larger scale "collaborative efforts directed at changing, over time, the basic policies and structures of a school system." Allnutt acknowledges that some caution is warranted, but challenges the critics of these partnerships to "get out there and proselytize on behalf of your own beliefs. Only when the battle is joined by us all...will real [school] improvement come about."

Source: *The Sentinel*, Newsmagazine of The Provincial Association of Protestant Teachers, Quebec, January 1993.

aside some monies for contracts. He sees no conflict of interest in board employees taking on such contracts, which "happens all the time in any institution," as long as the person squares it with the employer.

YNN President Rod MacDonald sees no ethical problem with offering contracts to people working for boards with which YNN has signed or is negotiating.

A spokesperson at the Quebec Ministry of Education explains that in Quebec every board sets its own policy on conflict of interest, and confirms that the norm for undertaking any outside contractual work is generally to inform a supervisor and receive permission.

Advisory Council member Lee Rother, a teacher at Laurenval Board, is also the President of the Association of Media Educators of Quebec (AMEQ). [The Canadian Association of Media Organizations (CAMEO), of which AMEQ is a member, has taken an official position against YNN as have most provincial media education organizations]. Rother says that if YNN should develop in a direction with which he disagrees, he will step down.

Until January 1993, YNN did not give out a list of the original council members, but they did refer often to the strong role being played by the council in the development of pedagogical guidelines. The council, in fact, did not meet as a group during 1992. Professor Jon Baggaley, Chairman of Concordia University's Department of Education, an original member, says the council was "neither ..convened nor consulted" during the 15 months he served.

Françoise Achim, of the South Shore School Board (Quebec), is disillusioned about her experience on the original council. "We were their pedagogical raison d'être, nothing else. I felt as though we were used to be spokespeople for YNN, to be ready on very short notice to speak on radio and tv talk shows..." After two or three meetings in fall of 1991, she heard nothing until December 1992 when she received a letter inviting her to sit on the "first" National Educational Advisory Council.

The new council is being called the "first," Conrod says, because it is the first to include national representation. According to a YNN information package, the advisory council is now a 22-member working committee consisting of "leaders from sectors of the Canadian educational community." They are responsible for advising on all aspects of programming and broadcast policy, for establishing guidelines, and for reviewing all commercial and editorial content of the News Channel programs.

So far, nine of the twenty-two members have been named, including four Quebecers, all of whom sat on the original council. Three of these are from Laurenval school board, the first to sign a contract with YNN in Quebec.

In a March 15 interview,* Rod MacDonald denied that members have been hand-picked. He said they are "working educators who've expressed an interest and who bring media literacy background to the table." That council "will determine policy with respect to major issues," but with respect to commercials, YNN hopes to achieve a balance.

In the same interview, Rod MacDonald said that YNN does not make claims about developing media literacy or critical thinking, or about affecting the drop-out rate. YNN's printed materials, on the other hand, list among its benefits "a media education program at little or no expense" and "an additional resource in the fight against the high school drop-out rate."

While MacDonald asserts that YNN is providing the high-cost equipment which governments cannot, he does not take responsibility for in-service and pre-service teacher training or for well-designed curricula. The company promises a "televised guide previewing themes, teacher technique and classroom strategy, and updates on their profession." Because this material has yet to be produced, it is impossible to know what it is, let alone to judge its value. The only sample they offer is the *Media Guide* put out by Channel One, while continuing to insist that YNN is different from Channel One and should not be judged by comparison.

Guidelines for partnerships

The smoke and mirrors surrounding the YNN project raise questions about school board employee involvement that could be more easily resolved if there were some general guidelines extant. For example, should board employees be allowed to accept contracts from companies with which a school does business? Should employees serve as advisors to companies lobbying their boards for contracts? These are the type of issues that need to be considered.

As recession and conservatism increasingly push schools to seek private sources of support, there will be increased temptation to compromise values in return for dollars. The YNN project signals to educators and parents across Canada the need to develop ethical and educational criteria for judging business-education proposals and preventing some of the abuses and conflicts of interest that already plague many North American universities.

* The interviews for this article were conducted by Linda Shohet and Judy Brandeis in March 1993.

Teaching editorials

The Centre for Literacy each fall co-sponsors with *The Gazette* an editorial opinion writing contest for senior high school and cegep students.

Teachers regularly request guidelines to introduce students to the genre. In this issue, we publish a teacher's overview of the editorial page; in the summer issue, we will present the OpEd page.

These guides can be used in a wide variety of classroom settings and contexts.

Prepared by Doug Sweet of *The Gazette* in December 1992, the materials are reprinted in two parts with permission.

The editorial and op-ed pages of a newspaper are different from the regular news columns. They contain a variety of opinion and commentary that has a special place in the paper. Here's a guide to The Gazette's editorial and op-ed pages that helps readers understand what goes on these pages and why.

THE EDITORIAL PAGE

1 Masthead

This is the masthead — the place where a newspaper says who is responsible for what it does and says. The word comes from the nautical term for the place where you fly your colors for all to see. (And the big stylized nameplate of a newspaper — in our case, the words *The Gazette* in gothic type — is sometimes called the flag.)

2 Editorials

Editorials are the formal opinion of *The Gazette*, written by the members of the editorial board. The board consists of Publisher Dave Perks, Editor-in-Chief Norman Webster, Editorial Page Editor Joan Fraser, Deputy Editorial Page Editor Doug Sweet, and editorial writers Henry Aubin, Edie Austin and, beginning in January, George Tombs. Editorial writers James Stewart and Pierce Fenhagen are retiring at the end of the year. The board meets each weekday at 10:15 (Perks rarely attends) to decide what to write about and what to say about it. We aim for a consensus; if that is not possible, editorials reflect the opinion of the majority. By 5 p.m., the editorials have been researched, written and edited. They are put in the page and proof-read by copy editor Larry McInnis. Editorial writers tend to specialize in certain areas (most foreign affairs editorials are written by Edie Austin, for example). No writer is ever asked to write an editorial with which he or she does not agree. The publisher, editor-in-chief and editorial page editors all have veto power, but this is exercised only very rarely.

3 Other Views

In this space, we run excerpts from editorials from other newspapers. On Sundays, for example, a selection of editorial comment from newspapers across Canada appears. The views expressed in these editorials may or may not coincide with a view expressed in *The Gazette*'s editorial columns.

On Mondays, we run excerpts from editorials appearing in newspapers outside Canada, usually from the United States, but occasionally from British or European newspapers.

Again, views expressed in those editorial columns don't necessarily follow the view of *Gazette* editorial writers.

4 Cartoons

The daily cartoon is usually done by *Gazette* cartoonist Terry Mosher, who draws under the name of Aislin. Our Sunday cartoonist is Theo Moudakis.

Cartoonists express their own opinions, not those of *The Gazette*. They are bound only by the rules of libel and by a very liberal interpretation of the canons of good taste.

5 Letters to the editor

These are letters from readers of *The Gazette* responding to something published in the paper or commenting on a topic of general interest.

Because we receive far more letters than we can publish, almost all letters are edited for length. They may also be edited to conform to basic style, to ensure clarity or to avoid libel. But we make every effort to preserve the writers' key points; our aim is to have as wide a variety of viewpoints as possible appear on the page, and particularly views that disagree with *The Gazette's* editorial policy.

We do not publish anonymous letters.

And although we withhold writers' addresses, we ask for addresses and phone numbers so that we may verify the writer's identity.

Watch for announcement of the 1993 Literacy Across the Curriculum writing contest in the Summer 1993 issue.

1

The Gazette

FOUNDED JUNE 3, 1778
BY FLEURY MESPLET

EDITORIALS

The lead editorial

Montre... s' interests need more protection. The Dore administration is ... ing city council bought to approve the opening of a casino on Ile Notre Dame. That's making Montrealers place a risky wager.

At this very late date, many questions remain unanswered about this project.

At first glance, the casino looks like an unconditional windfall for Montrealers.

2

By renting out its Palais de Civilisation to the casino, the city will get $3 million a year in rent and taxes. In exchange for this welcome income, the city will take no risks and spend little money. It is Quebec that will put up all $50 million of the project's capital, which includes the costs of renovating the Palais de Civilisation and building a new bridge between Ile Ste. Helene and Ile Notre Dame; the provincial government will also, through Loto-Quebec, assume operating expenses.

So, one might ask, why look a gift horse in the mouth? Because this may be less a gift horse or cash cow than a pig in the poke. Consider:

The reason the Quebec cabinet decided to isolate the casino in the middle of the St. Lawrence River was to keep it far from the city's hotels and bars. The goal was to minimize the project's potential to attract prostitution, loan-sharking, drug-trafficking and the other low-life activities that gambling tends to draw.

Montrealers lack hard assurances, however, that the city — which owns Ile Notre dame and Ile Ste. Helene — will not some day let privately-run hotels and clubs spring up close by, turning the island into a mini-Las vegas North.

This may sound far-fetched now. But what will happen if, as seems possible, tourists do not flock to the casino because they find its atmosphere too staid compared to Atlantic City and elsewhere? Authorities here might then be tempted to inject sizzle by permitting "commercial development" close by. What guarantees are there to keep the islands green?

Montrealers also know too little about law-enforcement measures.

The Montreal Urban Community police has said it would need to hire 80 extra officers and spend $6 million more a year for casino duties. Is Quebec going to pay this bill? Astonishingly, a city hall spokesman says the matter is still under negotiation with the provincial government.

This is far too important to be settled only after council approves the lease for the Palais de Civilisation tonight or tomorrow. Police costs, which MUC tax-

The middle editorial

Canada's contribution to keeping the peace in Cyprus has been long, honourable and effective. But enough is enough. After 28 years, and with far more pressing demands on this country's peacekeeping skills and finances, Ottawa's decision to withdraw Canadian troops from the UN Cyprus mission is thoroughly justified.

The withdrawal should probably have been ordered years ago. The UN force of 1,600 soldiers (575 of them Canadian) has successfully kept peace and order between Greek and Turkish Cypriots. But its continuing presence seems to have removed incentives for Cyprus leaders to negotiate in good faith and to make the compromises necessary for a durable political settlement.

The withdrawal of the Canadian contingent next year — and the probable reduction of contingents from Denmark, Britain and Austria — may be just the shock the leaders need. With or without a UN peacekeeping force on the scene, Cypriots themselves have to take ultimate responsibility for their own unity and stability.

Turkey and Greece, the "parent" countries of Cyprus, also have a major responsibility to foster peaceful resolution of the conflict on the Mediterranean island. Cyprus's troubles erupted into a shooting war nearly 30 years ago, following an attempted coup by Athens-backed supporters of union with Greece and a counter-attack by Turkish troops. Canadian troops arrived in 1964, as part of the UN peacekeeping mission, and ever since Canada has provided the main contingent of the force.

The UN and successive Canadian governments have shown extraordinary patience with Cyprus, and with that country's apparent lack of will to resolve its own conflicts. The

OTHER VIEWS

EDITORIALS FROM ACROSS CANADA

— *Calgary Herald, [illegible]* 0

The Canadian Olympic Associat...'s decision to allow Quebec City ... and not Calgary — to bid for the 2002 Winter Olympics flies in the face of reason. Then again, what else is new?

When it comes to the Winter Olympics economics, logistics, or simple common sense rarely apply. As a result, only one host city in the world can boast that its Winter Olympic facilities are still operational.

3

That city is Calgary, the site of the most successful Winter Olympics in modern history.

In a country that is supposedly moving toward economic responsibility, that should have been enough to ensure COA's endorsement of Calgary's bid to host the 2002 Winter Games.

The Calgary 2002 committee's plan to provide at least $29 million (and perhaps $100 million) for an Olympic athlete's legacy fund, while utilizing facilities from the 1988 Winter Games was cleverly designed to meet the economic realities of the coming decade.

Perhaps it was too clever.

Quebec City's bid, based on the acquisition of $240 million in federal funding for facilities construction, was designed to play to political, historical and economic realities that are no longer valid.

It worked. COA officials overlooked the flaws in the Quebec City presentation.

Other Canadians are not as myopic. The questions persist. Does Canada really need two sets of Winter Olympic facilities — one in Alberta and the other in Quebec?

Good luck, Quebec City. You'll need it.

— *Kingston Whig-Standard, Dec. 10*

In some provinces such as British Columbia, lung cancer has outstripped breast cancer as the leading cancer killer of women. Elsewhere in the country, lung cancer is coming up fast on the inside.

Obviously, no cancer is good, but no other cancers are as common or as deadly as lung

4

LETTERS

Letters to the editor go here

5

I applaud Minister of Communications Perrin Beatty on his decision to introduce measures to protect the privacy of Canada's cellular and cordless telephone users, but I must ask: What took you so long?

On April 7, I was the subject of a feature article in *The Gazette*, warning cellular and cordless users of the potential dangers of these forms of technology. The article was subsequently distributed and run in newspapers across Canada.

Uncertainty will harm Quebec economy

In the Dec. 5 headline article on Quebec, editorialists jumping to 14.5 per cent. I don't understand why Jacques Parizeau, Lucien Bouchard, Mario Beaulieu, Gilles Rhéaume for dismal economic policy failures and calls for a speedy election or sovereignty.

Surely, even Jacques Parizeau is smart enough to realize that a major part of the reason for the failure of Quebec economic policies is the uncertainty about whether Quebec will gain sovereignty and the certainty of the economic problem that will result if it does.

ROSS S. MILLER
Montreal

The brave men didn't intervene as woman beaten

On page 1 of *The Gazette* (Dec. 15) there was a picture of a Somali woman being stripped and beaten.

On page A10 you stated that the French and American soldiers watched.

None of these brave men, not presumably the photographer and reporters present, bothered to intervene.

They are in Somalia, I believe, for "humanitarian reasons."

CAROLE M. IRGO
Montreal

Gerry Weiner

Weiner plans to run in next election

Contrary to an article featured in *The Gazette* on Dec. 18, I will be actively seeking re-election in the federal riding of Pierrefonds-Dollard.

On Oct. 17 at a meeting of Montreal's major ethnic cultural communities leaders, with the prime minister and the national and ethnic media in attendance, I made this announcement.

I have served the people of this riding for nearly eight years and I look forward to the privilege of representing them after the next federal election.

GERRY WEINER
Ottawa

Consumers must stand to expose themselves to invasion of privacy each and every time they use the equipment.

The proposed legislation from Mr. Beatty's department will be virtually impossible to enforce.

I wish to emphasize that the solution lies in the education of the consumer. I am pleased to see that Mr. Beatty now seems to understand that these wireless units are not telephones but are in fact radios.

It isn't necessary for people to understand how every product they purchase operates. Very few people know how or why their refrigerators work, but the fridge isn't going to freak out their private conversations or eavesdropping public.

If legislation would be introduced to have manufacturers of cordless and cellular equipment include concise and clear information in owners' manuals stressing the possibility for invasion of privacy resulting from the use of the equipment, and if the consumer would take the time to read it, at least we would be able to say: We told you so.

No one party is responsible for the privacy problems resulting from today's technology, but an outlaw of prevention in this case would really be worth a lit-

Deal with roots of violent society

Obviously, we should be building more shelters and provide more services for women who are victims of violence but this will not reduce the incidents of violence against women. Only by dealing with the roots of this problem will it be solved.

Violence against women is rooted in the perceived right of men to dominate and control women. We need to ask ourselves why, and how this notion is nurtured in our society.

Is it possible to end violence against women as long as we are seen as objects, as sexual objects?

The present economic system, for example, teaches women to be passive and accept being treated like cheap, disposable commodities. If we stand up for our rights and advocate freedom is defined as an ability to consume. Can we stop violence against women as long as this system reduces women to consumers and consumable objects, who have no intrinsic value except that defined by consumerism and men's fantasies?

In our fight against violence we need to go beyond a shopping list of demands and deal with the roots of the problem. We could start in 1993 by asking women what the world would look like if it were to serve our interests.

ANET HENRIKSO
Montreal

THE GAZETTE WELCOMES LETTERS. They should be signed and must include the writer's full name, address and daytime phone number. Letters may be condensed, although care is taken to preserve the core of the writer's argument. We are unable to acknowledge receipt of letters or return unpublished letters. Send letters to 250 St. Antoine St. W., Montreal H2Y 3R7. Letters can be sent to our fax number at 987-2500. The writer's signature must be visible.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The Politics of Workplace Literacy
A Case Study

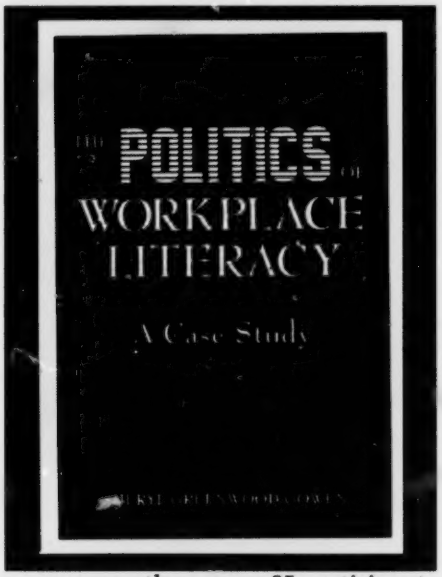
By Sheryl Greenwood Gowen
reviewed by Sue Folinsbee

The *Politics of Workplace Literacy* is probably one of the most important contributions to the field of workplace literacy currently available. Gowen's analysis, presented through an enthnographic study, challenges status quo beliefs about literacy and work, and about the conceptualization, start-up process and development of workplace education programs.

This book makes some important observations around literacy and work. First, conceptualizing a program without determining workers' values, beliefs, and ideas about what can and should be included can render the program meaningless to their needs. Second, it is naive to think that literacy programs alone can enhance an employee's chance for advancement.

Long-standing systemic issues of sexism, racism and classism keep people in low-paying, entry-level jobs, regardless of their basic skills. In addition, ways of working, communicating, and instructing that differ from the white, organizational mainstream are generally not valued by those within the mainstream who hold the reins of power. These different ways of making meaning are interpreted by those in power as sub-standard, reinforcing the perceived need for workers to upgrade their literacy or communications skills.

This book documents one workplace literacy program for front-line workers in a southern U. S. hospital over a period of nine months from start-up to evaluation . Workers in the program were all African-Americans from housekeeping, food service and laundry ranging in age from 19-63. Over the course of the



program there were 65 participants, twenty of whom continued from beginning to end.

Gowan begins by challenging popular reasons for the literacy crisis and suggests that putting the onus on individuals and schools

Resistance is one way that employees feel that they have some power in a workplace they believe is exploiting them. This resistance, reports Gowan, is often interpreted by management as poor communication, literacy and problem-solving skills on the part of their employees.

diverts attention from workplace restructuring that is needed to help workers adapt to rapid change.

She illustrates the difficulties that occur when the workplace project's curriculum developer and instructor try to implement both the literacy audit and the functional context approach. Differences in interviews with management and supervisors and employees suggest that the literacy audit is not as helpful as the literature review suggests it is. There is difficulty reconciling the job-specific literacy goals of the funding agency and the functional context approach with the real goals of participants.

Many participants resist activities that deal with job texts that they feel are insulting to their ability to do a job well, one they have been doing for many years. Resistance takes the form of participants not coming to class, working on something else, working slowly or stating that they lost the materials. In other cases, Gowan shows that teaching people to follow written procedures at work is sometimes a meaningless task because that is not how the work is carried out in real situations, even by those in positions of power.

Gowan presents the hospital structure and culture as a throwback from the days of slavery. She observes that program participants use plantation metaphors to describe workplace exploitation and that the hospital works in many of the same ways the plantation model worked. There is a very clear hierarchy with a "master" at the head of the hospital, and employees who cook, wash and clean seen as invisible. These employees complain about being treated like slaves and being talked to like children or animals. Resistance is one way that employees feel that they have some power in a workplace they believe is exploiting them. This resistance, reports Gowan, is often interpreted by management as poor

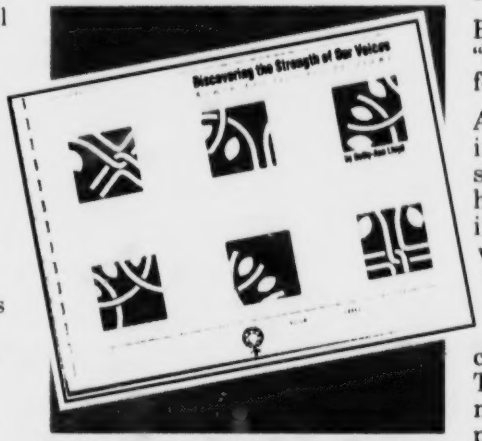
communication, literacy and problem-solving skills on the part of their employees. Gowan points out that one employee goal is to "advance,"which could mean getting the GED, getting a better job or more education. Over half the program participants saw their goal as relating to self-improvement; getting a GED certificate was important for over a third of program participants. Program planners' and management's idea of advancement is to move into a better-paying job. Because the funding agency required that the program focus on workplace tasks, objectives and activities that focused on the needs of participants were referred to as the "hidden curriculum." Gowan describes how Aisha, the innovative instructor, works to include the goals of the employees while at the same time including the required workplace-related activities.

In closing, Gowan concludes that the agenda for literacy training may not be to improve literacy skills but to alter behavior so it more closely matches the behavior of the mainstream culture. Gowan recommends that a more productive approach to workplace education would be to adopt a participatory model. Within this mode, all stakeholders would define the problem and determine the solutions.

The Politics of Workplace Literacy is a must-read for anyone concerned about creating workplace education programs that meet the real needs of workers. As a bonus, the author's easy-to-read style kept me rivetted from beginning to end.

Sue Folinsbee is the workplace literacy consultant with ABC CANADA. She will co-facilitate the 1993 Summer Institute on Workplace Education at The Centre for Literacy.

Discovering The Strength of our Voices — a report on women and literacy programs in Canada
By Betty-Ann Lloyd, 1992.
reviewed by Carol Potter



In *Discovering The Strength of our Voices,* author/researcher Betty-Ann Lloyd considers three important questions for literacy workers:

- What does it mean to think and talk about ourselves as women?
- How can we understand what we hear when we listen to women?
- When we hear women's stories about their lives, how do we begin to "do" literacy?

Lloyd's report is based on visits to four Canadian communities on the west and east coasts, in central Canada, and in the north, where she interviewed administrators, tutors, and students in college, community and volunteer programs.

Since most of her interviews were with women's groups, she asked the women whether they thought their groups would be different if they included men. The response was immediate and indicated that men and women learn differently and that most women are more comfortable in single-sex groups.
"I think a lot of us would shut up."
"You're talking about certain things you just don't want to talk to men about."
"I would be scared to talk. I don't know why."

But some said things like:
"Sometimes these men... it's good for them to hear our problems."

As well as student stories, Lloyd included worker stories which show the terrible frustration and helplessness literacy workers feel in response to some of the women's stories. For example when a student told her teacher, "I can either get the bus to this program, or I can send my children to school with lunch. That's my choice. I don't have money for both." For some program workers, the barriers at times seemed insurmountable.

> One of the women talked about how, as she listened to other women's stories..., she had to learn about cruelty. She had to learn how cruel people could be. Once she learned that, she had to begin to see cruelty all around her— including in her own program.

And sometimes "doing literacy" had little to do with reading and writing. One worker described a woman who came to an upgrading program:

> (She) was even afraid to go out, and now she talks and visits around and almost seems a different person. I don't see any improvements in her writing and reading .... but her attitude and the way she acts towards the world is completely different now. And that's what I call literacy.

Lloyd's report is a poignant look at the lives of women suffering from a lack of literacy. It is a fearsome

continued on page 12

continued from page 11

description of the barriers which keep them mired in worlds limited by poverty, violence, isolation and sexual abuse. The author seeks ways of overcoming those barriers but also ways to work with students who must continue to live with them.

What comes through very clearly, however, is a reminder of this huge, untapped resource of human power–waiting!

Discovering the strength of our voices is the second phase of a research project funded by the Canadian Co. gress for Learning Opportunities for Women (CCLOW).

Carol Potter teaches Pedagogy at Dawson College. She has worked as avolunteer in adult literacy and has helped set up the literacy program at the Montreal YWCA.

To celebrate National Literacy Day

The Montreal YWCA Literacy Council will sponsor Barriers to Literacy

Speaker: Jenny Horsman, author of *Something on my Mind Beside the Everyday*

Date: September 11, 1993
Place: YWCA, 1355 René Lévesque Blvd.
Time: 8:30 p.m.

CCLOW Quebec Canadian Congress for Learning for Women

Women's self-esteem studies: a feminist critique

On March 2, 1993, Fran Davis and Arlene Steiger, two Vanier College researchers who have been studying women's learning in science, animated a discussion in which they presented a critique of the many studies that have been conducted linking women's self-esteem to learning. These studies are cited frequently by researchers working on women and literacy.

Davis and Steiger outlined four main problems with self-esteem studies and gave a detailed analysis of each. The problems are abstracted below:

1. They depend somewhat on sex role concept.
2. They fail to demonstrate causal link with academic achievement.
3. They depend on an overly narrow definition of self as a mirror.
4. They fail to deal adequately with complexities of race and class.

For more information on this research, contact Fran Davis or Arlene Steiger at Vanier College, Tel.: (514) 744-7120.

Workplace Education: Developing a vision

a summer institute

Montreal, June 27 – 30,1993

ABC CANADA

We must challenge many assumptions in current thinking on workplace literacy initiatives–their motivation, process and assessment

We will explore:

- ➤ The philosophical, the practical and the personal
- ➤ Principles of good practice–what are they?
- ➤ Critical issues in workforce education
- ➤ The balance between economic and social dimensions of literacy
- ➤ How to implement workforce education using principles of good practice
- ➤ Advocacy–how to do it

The institute will be limited to 20 participants and consideration will be given to ensuring a good geographical balance across Canada.

Our goal for this institute is to develop workforce education (literacy) activities that incorporate principles of good practice, using the skills and expertise of participants.

The Institute Leaders:

Linda Shohet is director of the Centre for Literacy and editor of *Literacy across the Curriculum.*
Sue Folinsbee, workplace consultant, is responsible for ABC CANADA's Workplace Literacy Advisory Service.

- ➤ Fees are covered by corporate support (through ABC CANADA) for model programs in workplace literacy. Working materials, breakfasts and lunches are included. Participants are responsible for travel costs, accommodations, and other meals.

The resources in The Centre for Literacy

are catalogued and may be borrowed in person or by mail (postage covered by the borrower). Documents can be consulted in The Centre from Monday - Friday, 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

In addition to the materials listed in the catalogue, we have directories of programs and services, bibliographies on many subjects, international periodicals and newsletters, catalogues of learning materials, tapes/videos, and boxes of newspaper/magazine clippings. We are also connected to the National Adult Literacy Database.

Printouts on specific subject headings can be requested at cost. For information, please call Catherine Duncan at (514) 931-8731, local 1415.

Selected resources: Native literacy

Arctic College. (1989). *Stories From Sanikaluaq.* " NWT: Arctic College. student-produced material; short stories. 750/01

Busswood, Kevin. (1989)."A.C.C.C. Support for Indian Education: A Letter to the Canadian Program Advisory Committee." BC: Fraser Valley College. 750/23

Carter, Forrest. (1976). *The Education of Little Tree.* University of New Mexico Press. Albuquerque. aboriginal; biographies. 750/25

Frontier School Division. (1990)."Adult Literacy in Northern Manitoba." Frontier School Division."adult literacy, Manitoba, natives. 750/32

Goodman,Yetta M., and Sandra Wilde. (1992). *Literacy Events in a Community of Young Writers.* New York, NY. Teachers College Press, Columbia University. Native education; elementary.

Hot Numbers: Some Preliminary Resources. BC: Aboriginal peoples; British Columbia — Canada 750/21

Ministry of Education. (1984). *Native Literacy and Life Skills Curriculum Guidelines: A Resource Book for Adult Basic Education.* Victoria, BC: Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology. Aboriginal peoples; adult basic education; literacy programs; British Columbia — Canada. 750/20

Native Adult Education Resource Centre. (1991). *Dene Literacy Manual. Volume One. Guide for Programmers.* Literacy Projects; Guidelines; N.W.T. 750/28

Native Adult Education Resource Centre. (1991) *Dene Literacy Manual. Volume two. Guide for Instructors.* Literacy projects; Instructor manual; N.W.T. Canada. 750/29

Native Tutoring Centre. (1987).*Spirits Rising: A Collection of Native Indian Writings & Illustrations.* Toronto, ON: Frontier College Press. Aboriginal peoples; student-written short stories; Ontario—Canada. 750/22

Pasula, Sharon. (1992.) "Metis Nation of Alberta Literacy Project." AB: Metis Nation of Alberta. Aboriginal peoples; literacy projects; literacy programs; report; Alberta—Canada. 750/11

"Proceedings of the Native Adult English Literacy Conference", April 20 - 21,1988. 750/04

Rivera, Klaudia. (1990) "Developing Native Language Literacy in Language-Minority Adult Learners." National Clearinghouse on Literacy Education. ERIC Digest. 750/30

Rodriguez, Carmen, and Don Sawyer. (1990). *Native Literacy Research Report.* British Columbia: Native Adult Education Resource Centre. (Okanagan College). aboriginal literacy programs. 750/08

Sawyer, Don and Art Napoleon. (1991). *The NESA Activities Handbook for Native and Multicultural Classrooms.* Vol. 2. Vancouver, BC: Tillacum Library. Aboriginal peoples; activities; classroom instruction; multiethnic groups. 750/15

Sawyer, Don and Art Napoleon. (1991). *Native English Curriculum Guidelines: A Resource Book for Adult Educators.* Victoria, BC: Ministry of Adult Education, Training And Technology. Aboriginal peoples; English language; curriculum guidelines; British Columbia. 750/17

Sawyer, Don and Calvin White. (1990.) *Discussion Guide for Effective Instruction of Native Adults Video Series.* Salmon Arm, BC: Okanogan College."Aboriginal peoples; audiovisual materials; adult education; British Columbia — Canada. 750/31

Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs. (1990). *You Took My Talk': Aboriginal Literacy and Empowerment.* Fourth Report. House of Commons of Canada.Aboriginal affairs policy; Cultural preservation; Canadian Government Report. 750/26

The Native Adult Education Resource Centre."Provincial Native Adult Instructor Diploma Program: Synopsis." Salmon Arm, BC: Okanagan College. 750/12

Verrall, Catherine and Patricia McDowell. (1990.) *Resource Reading List: Annotated Bibliography of Resources By and About Native People.* Toronto, ON: Canadian Alliance in Solidarity with the Native Peoples. Aboriginal peoples; Canada; bibliography. 750/16

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British Columbia Ministry of Education, Learning Resources Branch. (1989). *Effective Instruction of Native Adults: Student-Centred Learning.* (VHS 13 min.)

British Columbia Ministry of Education, Learning Resources Branch. (1989). *Effective Instruction of Native Adults: Counselling and Support Services.* (VHS 14 min.)

British Columbia Ministry of Education, Learning Resources Branch. (1989). *Effective Instruction of Native Adults: Building Culture into Programs.* (VHS 13 min.)

British Columbia Ministry of Education, Learning Resources Branch. (1989) *Effective Instruction of Native Adults: Life Skills.* (VHS 12 min.)

British Columbia Ministry of Education, Learning Resources Branch. (1989). *Effective Instruction of Native Adults: Native Learning/Teaching Styles.* (VHS 14 min.)

Montreal Conferences

58th Annual Convention
The Association for Business Communication
"Communication and the New Global Order"
October 27 - 30, 1993
Montreal, Quebec
Information: Dr. Joel Bowman, Tel: (616)387-5410; Fax: (616) 345-2740; Internet: bowman@gw.wmich.edu
Deadline for proposals: May 31, 1993

Chronological Conference Listing

Association of Canadian Community Colleges Annual Conference
"Connections: Campus & Community"
June 6 - 9, 1993
Edmonton, AB

Commission on Adult Basic Education National Conference
June 7 -11, 1993
New Orleans, LA

Higher Education and Workforce Development
"Real problems/real solutions"
June 16 -18, 1993
Saratoga Springs, NY

The Goddard Institute on Teaching and Learning
"Student-Centered, Problem-Focused Education"
June 25 - July 23, 1993
Plainfield, VT.

The Walloon Institute 1993 Fourth Annual Institute
Petoskey, Michigan
Session 1 June 23 -27, 1993
- The Reading/Writing Workshop
- Instructional Leadership for School Renewal

Session 2 July 7 -11, 1993
- Whole Language: Integrating Instruction from K to C
- Instructional Leadership for School Renewal

Information: Tel.(708) 441-6638

Martha's Vineyard Summer Workshops
1993 Institute on Writing and Teaching
organized by Northeastern University, Boston
Sessions: July 1-3, 1993; July 5-17, 1993; July 19-30, 1993
Information: Tim Donovan, Tel: (617) 437-3637

The Penn State Conference on Rhetoric &Composition
July 7 -10, 1993
Penn State University
Information: Davida Charney, Tel: (814) 865-9703; Fax: (814) 863-7285
e-mail: IRJ at PSUVM.PSU.EDU

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Gender and Science and Technology Conference
Ontario Women's Directorate
"Transforming Science & Technology: Our Future Depends on It"
July 31 - August 5, 1993
University of Waterloo
Waterloo, ON

13th Annual International Conference on Critical Thinking & Educational Reform
"Educational Reform for the 21st Century"
"The New Global Economic Realities"
August 1 - 4, 1993
Workshops, July 30 & 31
Sonoma State University
Rohnert, CA
Information: Tel.(707) 664-2940

Fourth Annual International Whole Language Umbrella Conference
August 5 - 8, 1993
Winnipeg, MN
Information: Tel.(204) 237-5214; fax (204) 237-3426

8th Annual Northeast Whole Language Conference
August 9 -14, 1993
Johnson State College
Johnson, VT

Composition in the 21st Century
"Crisis and Change"
October 8 - 10, 1993
Miami University
Oxford OH

Second National Writing Conference
"Building Bridges"
October 20 - 23, 1993
Winnipeg, MN

1993 Fall Forum
Coalition of Essential Schools
November 4 - 6, 1993
Louisville KY

Annual Meeting Society for Literature and Science
November 18 - 21, 1993
MIT
Boston & Cambridge MA

National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)
November 19 - 22, 1993
Pittsburgh, PA

1993 Annual Adult Education Conference
November 18 - 20, 1993
Dallas TX
See Announcements for more detail.

1993 Modern Language Association
December 26 - 30, 1993
Toronto, ON

College Composition and Communication (CCCC) Winter Workshop
January 6 - 8, 1994
Clearwater Beach, FL

1994 Conference on College Composition and Communication
March 16 -19, 1994
Nashville, TN

Details on listings available from The Centre for Literacy, (514) 931-8731, local 1415.

Summer Programs

Native Adult Instructor Diploma Program

July 12 - August 20, 1993
Okanagan University College
Kelowna, BC

Offered by the Native Adult Education Resource Centre of Okanagan College in six 1-week modules. All six modules and the practicum must be taken to obtain the diploma. However, individuals may attend specific modules and receive credits throught the Continuing Education Department of Okanagan University College.

Relevant to anyone, Native or non-Native, working in adult instruction or with First Nation adults in community development or education. Registration limited. Information: Rita Jack, (604) 376-0450.

National Adult Literacy Database (NALD)

NALD is a database and bulletin board service to literacy practitioners and researchers across Canada. With listings of more than 5000 literacy programs/projects and services, NALD can provide directories and contact names to anyone setting up new programs or investigating practices. It can also set up electronic conferencing on request.
For information on how you or your organization can benefit from NALD, contact: Tamara Ilersich, NALD, c/o Fanshawe College, London Ontario,
Tel. (519) 452-4446;
fax (519) 451-8831.

Literacy Partners of Quebec (LPQ) &The Centre for Literacy are pleased to repeat a week-long intensive tutor training session

Tutor and Instructor Training for Adult Literacy

LPQ

Leader: Phil Davison
formerly Training Program Developer, Nova Scotia
Dates: August 9 - 13, 1993

Who should register for this training?
This research-based model of training prepares tutors to work with individual learners and can also help teachers integrate more effective reading, writing, speaking, thinking, and listening strategies into regular classroom teaching.

While addressed primarily to tutors and teachers of literacy/language, the program has been used by teachers in other subject areas as well. With its emphasis on reading and writing, it provides a scaffold for learning across the disciplines and across grade levels.

Schedule Overview:
Each session runs for 2-3 hours.
Two sessions are scheduled per day with sessions 10 & 11 combined into one.

Session 1:	**Adult Literacy, basic education and academic upgrading in your community, workplace or institution**
Session 2:	**Some things that are known about reading**
Session 3:	**Some things that are known about writing**
Session 4:	**Finding out what people want or need to know**
Session 5:	**Review informal assessments & level A; use of learning activities**
Session 6:	**Review level B, use of learning activities**
Session 7:	**Review level C, use of learning activities, responding to writing**
Session 8:	**Review level D, working with groups, publishing**
Session 9:	**What to do if there does not seem to be much progress**
Session 10:	**Some things that are known about math**
Session 11:	**Practicum reports and training package evaluation**

REGISTRATION: Registration is limited to 20. Fee: $75.00. **Registration deadline: June 30, 1993.**
For more information, call (514) 931-8731, local 1413 or 1415, or FAX 931-5181.

P G I

Peter Gzowski Invitational Golf Tournament Québec

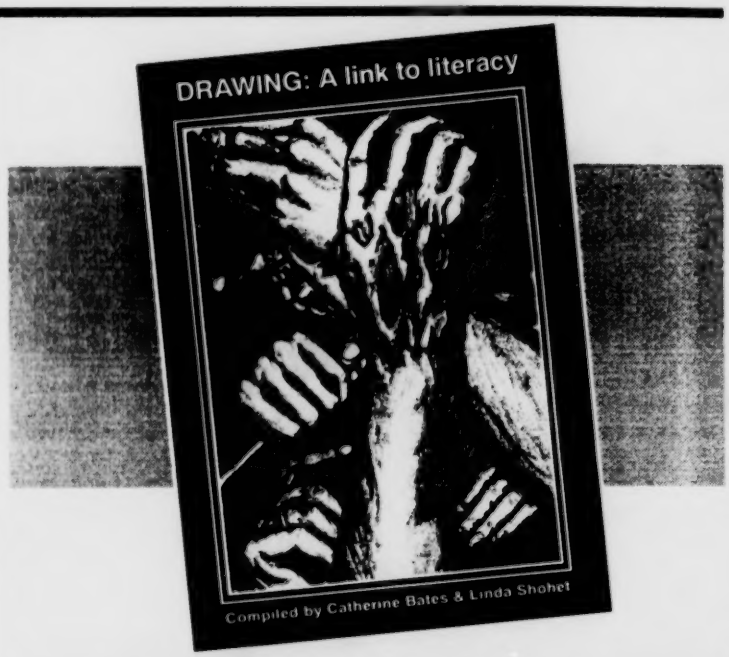
Club de Golf Ile Perrot
$250 per golfer

P.G.I. Golf includes:

Sunday – BBQ
6:00 to 9:00 p.m. – John Abbott College
Monday – Golf
9:30 a.m. – Registration begins
10:30 a.m. to noon – Brunch
12:30 p.m. – Shotgun start, scramble
6:30 p.m. – Cash bar
7:30 p.m. – Supper and prizes

For more information, call Francesca Arpin, The Gazette, (514) 987-2391.

Fund raiser for Literacy Partners of Quebec



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Media FOCUS

THE CENTRE FOR LITERACY

Scaring ourselves to death: Canadians battle the nightmare machine

by David Deskin

Canadians are waging war with their own "nightmare machine." The machine is TV, and the nightmare is TV violence. The common-sense view that TV violence invites imitation, or at least desensitization, and that rising social violence is the result of rising TV violence, has led to a nation-wide grassroots protest against television's "mean and dangerous world."

Hearing the call, Canadian legislators, regulators, and broadcasters insist we will soon see controls put on this "stranger in the corner." On November 18th, 1992, 14 year-old Virginie Lariviere, whose 11-year-old sister had been brutally murdered a year before, arrived in Ottawa with her 1.5-million-signature petition calling on government to legislate an end to TV violence. That day, the House of Commons instructed its Standing Committee on Communication and Culture, with representatives from the three major parties, to study TV violence and return with concrete recommendations. Until late February, the

Committee heard testimony from a long list of experts. It is expected to table its report in May.

But Communications Minister Perrin Beatty may have anticipated their recommendations when he told a February public conference on TV violence, (held in Toronto at the CM Hincks Institute), that we will soon see "a strong uniform code on television violence for all elements of the industry, [which] sets out boundaries for such things as dramas and music videos; which warns viewers what they are about to see; [which] safeguards against violence against women; and ensures that programming that is possibly harmful is on after the kids have gone to bed." Beatty added that if consensus can't be reached with Canadian broadcasters, he will have the CRTC "develop and enforce such codes."

Legislating against TV violence

In other words, Canada will borrow from restrictions in place in Western Europe, Australia, New Zealand, and less developed countries like Colombia. Namely, a violence-free window will be in effect until about 9 p.m., for Canadian broadcasts. The Canadian Association of Broadcasters recently agreed to this. Violence ratings will appear on-screen and in TV-viewing guides — all with the intention that children be subjected to less TV violence. Conspicuous by its absence, in Canada at least, is official discussion

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Medi FOCUS

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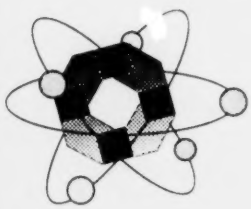
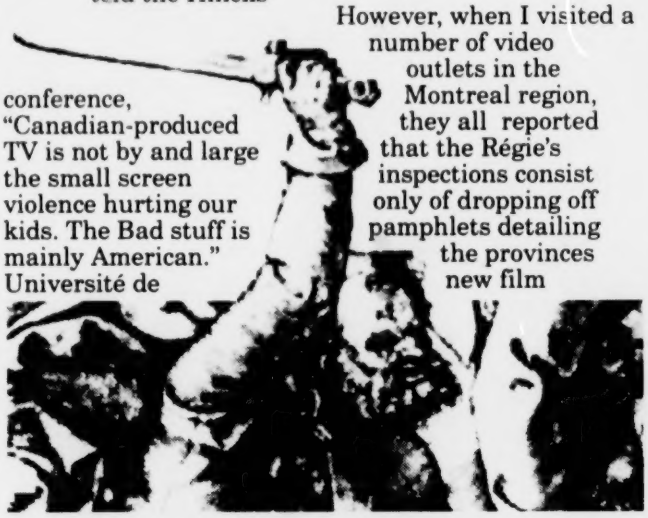


Literacy for the 21st century
Literacy encompasses a complex set of abilities to understand and use the dominant symbol systems of a culture for personal and community development. In a technological society, the concept of literacy is expanding to include the media and electronic text, in addition to alphabetic and number systems. These abilities vary in different social and cultural contexts according to need and demand. Individuals must be given life-long earning opportunities to move along a continuum that includes the reading and writing, critical understanding, and decision-making abilities they need in their community.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

of supper-hour newscasts, the most violent programming of all.

Trying to restrict consumption is a dicey proposition. As CRTC chairman Keith Spicer told the Hincks' conference, "Canadian-produced TV is not by and large the small screen violence hurting our kids. The Bad stuff is mainly American." Université de Laval professor Florian Sauvageau testified before the Standing Committee, "Even if we do enact legislation on distribution, it will not apply to the networks in New York." Canadian Association of Broadcasters board member Al MacKay passed the buck to other televisual sources such as cable-distributors, specialty channels, video games, and video cassette rental outlets. MacKay added, "There are no enforceable controls or guidelines in terms of classification or age limitations for movie rentals."



However, film and video regulation is a provincial jurisdiction, and in Quebec at least, there are enforceable codes. In a recent letter to the editor of The Montreal Gazette, Régie du Cinema chairman Claude Benjamin wrote, "Since 1989 [the Régie's] surveillance has been extended to video stores. Since June 15, (1992), all 3,745 video outlets registered in the province have been visited, and a second round of inspections is under way."

However, when I visited a number of video outlets in the Montreal region, they all reported that the Régie's inspections consist only of dropping off pamphlets detailing the provinces new film classification system. Benjamin also writes, "Since 1989, 85 individuals and corporations have been fined for a total of $55,075, with 84 judicial cases pending trial."

But as kids will tell you, access to adult videos and movies is easy for them. Film-studios and video distributors flaunt their awareness of this. Educational consultant Sandra Campbell told the hearings, "On the (Terminator-2) videos you can buy for purchase, there are trailers at the beginning and end, advertising toys for boys 4 to 8." However, kids will also tell you they aren't that disturbed by adult-movies, but find newscasts more unsettling.

In March, the *Globe and Mail* reported that the Committee may also ask the government to pass Criminal Code amendments, "restricting the type of violence that can be shown on TV and videos." The committee heard time and again that, "the real problem is videos;" however, the Committee also struggled with a practical definition of violence. The Criminal Code approach is bolstered by the recent Supreme Court decision, "R v. Butler.' According to the Canadian parliament's Research Branch, "The Butler decision is extremely important in its recognition of the harm to society generally and to women in particular that is associated with demeaning and dehumanizing depictions of sex.... It lays to rest for the time being any doubts about the constitutionality of the obscenity provisions of the Criminal Code."

Essentially, the decision makes harm to society judicially superior to free-expression. Put "obscene" depictions of violence and apparent failure of the "community standards test," into the Criminal Code, and we're on the road to censorship, which has artists, producers and civil libertarians worried, especially since "violence" has an even wider scope than "pornography."

Missing the real violence

These recent actions may miss salient aspects of TV violence. For example, we ignore the "real" violence in TV newscasts and reality-based programming, while we concentrate on the "preposterous violence" in dramas. Video cassettes pale in comparison to the imminent arrival of "death-stars' and

interactive digital-information highways, which will increase TV consumption, personalize mass-entertainment and fragment mass-culture as never before, and push TV violence further underground. We also fail to examine why symbolic violence is so popular in the first place.

At the very least, TV, like other forms of pop entertainment, including the news, perpetuates a popular culture of violence–an unshakable public obsession with sado-masochistic voyeurism. Research suggests that this voyeurism has many possible effects: from adrenalin addiction to catharsis,(if true, look out if we end TV violence) to behavioral modelling, and more. While some say the violent behaviour we see in society is an imitation of TV violence, TV might affect societal violence more from the sense of relative deprivation — of wealth, power, sex, — that it inflames, especially as unemployment grows.

More than selling cars, beer or even violent behaviour, some researchers say the media sells fear. According to University of Winnipeg criminologist Doug Skoog, the media's coverage of crime is itself "criminal." He says that while Canada's most reliable crime indicator, the murder rate, has been falling since the mid-'70s, the media, "seem absolutely bent on creating a climate of fear in which crime is always rising." Skoog adds, "If it led to something positive, that would be great, but all that happens is people sit around and worry."

In a recent issue of *Media & Values*, University of Delaware researcher Nancy Signorielli writes:

There is evidence, mostly in artificial laboratory settings, that viewers become callous and punitive after exposure to violent images. But this connection is neither clear nor sweeping. My colleagues and I have found that violence on television plays a clear role in communicating the social order. Television's mean and dangerous world cultivates a sense of insecurity, vulnerability and mistrust. Thus my concerns about children watching violent programming would focus less on its role as a behavioral model and more on its role in helping to make children fearful, insecure and dependant upon authority. If television encourages the name of security, it creates more of a problem for our society.

TV even seems to have the police dangerously afraid. Perrin Beatty told the Hincks conference that, "A training company working with the Metropolitan Police in Toronto found that police often perceive their jobs to be significantly more dangerous than they are in reality. The police shows they watch on television give them a false notion that as police officers they will come into frequent conflict with armed assailants. And this is not so." Does this help to explain a recent series of mistaken police shootings?

While a proliferation of violent 6-year-old human Ninja Turtles may attest to nothing more than a modern version of age-old violent child's play, nevertheless, TV does help to perpetuate a social order that, amongst other things, glorifies bullying by boys and passivity in girls. While boys start off their televisual enculteration with Ninja Turtles and G.I. Joe, girls prefer Smurfs and Care Bears who smother the villains with love. As American researcher Petra Hesse told *Strategies for Media Literacy* in a recent interview, "Girls get the message that yes, there are evil people out to get you, but you must hope that some magic trick will come your way to save you, or that love conquers all, or that a knight in shining armour will rescue you. The good girl characters in cartoons are well-behaved, not angry, but subordinate and passive. The good boys are warriors."

Alternatives

Trying to restrict quantities of TV violence becomes less important than learning to consume it with prudence, and learning to deconstruct TV's many signs and symbols in terms appropriate to student maturity. The government has made proposals in this direction, though in less concrete terms. Beatty announced to the Hincks conference "a [government and industry-sponsored] public education campaign, including public service announcements and media-literacy initiatives," which will probably focus on helping parents choose what their children should and shouldn't watch. While it remains to be seen what tools will be given to parents, the sad truth is that most parents, (let alone most teachers), could not care less - attested to by the fact that media- education, (especially at the elementary level), remains absent from most Canadian schools.This is astounding because we will spend more hours watching TV than we will at our workplace during our lifetime.

The tremendous difficulty of tightening access, because of evasive technology, an important distaste for censorship, lack of parental concern, and the resilience of sado-masochistic voyeurism, means that formal media-education may be the only way we can hope to affect substantial change. However, even for the few who do provide media-education, there is a lack of formal pedagogy,for discussion of the cultures of violence and fear. As Association of Media Literacy president Barry Duncan recently wrote, "We lack the models for this special kind of teaching. We risk over-intellectualizing and possibly confirming existing prejudices."

Until we develop an effective pedagogy; until media-education becomes common-place; until the power of the media itself turns to more positive educational ends, we will continue scaring ourselves to death, and still come back for more.

David Deskin is a Montreal writer.
The Centre for Literacy has a collection of resource materials on TV violence.

The video camera in the classroom:

Connecting whole language to media literacy

Montreal director Michael Rubbo is internationally acclaimed for children's films such as "The Peanut Butter Solution" and "Vincent and Me". Combining his filmmaking expertise with an interest in education., he works with teachers and students in the classroom to create a more literate generation of film consumers and media makers. Academic Alliance of EnglishTeachers, sponsored by the Association of Teachers of English of Quebec (ATEQ) & The Centre for Literacy welcomed Rubbo to an evening at Dawson College on January 26, 1993.

Michael Rubbo brought a new perspective to the media literacy movement as he spoke about how to use the videocamera in the classroom.

Rubbo described his first involvement with children's films as somewhat serendipitous. Recalling his earlier career at the NFB producing socio-political documentaries, he never anticipated that the stories he was writing for his son at the time would ever reach a larger audience. Then one day in 1983, over lunch with children's film-maker Rock Demers, he referred casually to the stories and Demers proposed that Rubbo consider making children's films.

Telling a good story

Having taken the challenge and needing a real sense of children's interests, Rubbo took his stories directly to the source—the classroom. While visiting schools as a storyteller he discovered that the children were natural actors. Not only did he get invaluable feedback on the scripts, but he saw the potential of using members of his young audiences to act in the films. He began to videotape them to prove to Demers that these non-professional actors were the *right* ones. Until today, he provides children with a storyline, tapes their improvisations, and incorporates much of their dialogue back into his script. That natural childrens' language has become a hallmark of a Rubbo film, and he still travels the world looking for his characters.

Rubbo underscores the value of improvisation in the classroom as a means of capturing children's brilliant but limited range. He has also found it a way of including many withdrawn youngsters who would not ordinarily participate in classroom activities. The spontaneity and freshness which are so easily caught in the classroom taping can rarely be recaptured for a feature film. But Rubbo pays special attention to these qualities.

Coming in the back door

When he asked a teacher whom he visited regularly why it was so easy for him to get access to classroom time, she replied by asking him if he knew what

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

B O X

Making a video in the classroom: Tips from Michael Rubbo

DO

- Use a fairly classical approach to the story and its structure.
- Stress the elements of a good story, e.g. characters, twists, conflict.
- Draw on experiences that are emotional rather than physical.
- Be firm about the story content and insist on *no violence*.
- Use small-scale stories, avoiding anything too elaborate or complicated e.g. choose a simple plot with obvious conflict drawn from familiar experiences.
- Become very familiar with the camera in order to convey that familiarity to the students.

DO NOT

- Fear the camera.
- Use a tripod; this suggests that the camera is an "icon" making it the focus. Instead, hold the camera unobtrusively at your side.
- Shoot out of sequence.
- Make a big deal of it!

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

whole language was. He had no idea; her advice was, "Just keep doing what you're doing." Without knowing it, his approach to media literacy was a natural fit with the concept of whole language.
He now feels very comfortable with the concept of whole language and urges teachers to include media literacy in their classrooms. He encourages them to have students make their own videos. In his own interaction with youngsters, he introduces the concept of film language.

Rubbo believes that a great deal of story-telling ability and spontaneity is untapped, and points out that technology has far exceeded its use in the classroom. Video is the great equalizer, for there is something affirming about the videocamera, and these film are "...a delivery system for ideas and feelings." Embedded in the rough tapes are what Rubbo calls "moments of truth." These are "...the special candid moments that the medium offers...." which he values so highly. (JB)

Michael Rubbo is available for workshops with teachers and / or students. For information, (514) 276-1190.

Media resources:

Newspapers in education

This issue continues listing media resources at The Centre for Literacy

The Centre has a collection of special publications and Newspapers in Education (NIE) classrom materials for use in schools and in literacy programs. The American Newspaper Publishers Association (ANPA), the Canadian Daily Newspaper Publishers Association (CDNPA) and many of their member newspapers include teaching sections in their dailies as well as publish special teachers' guides.
There are also materials on analysis of advertising.

The Centre is open from 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., Monday to Friday. Materials can be borrowed for two weeks at no cost.

For information, call 931-8731, local 1415.

News & Notes

Conferences

International Visual Literacy Association - 1993 Symposium "Verbo-Visual Literacy: Understanding and Applying New Educational and Communication Media Technologies
Delphi, Greece, June 26 – 29, 1993
Inquiries: Dr. Nikos Metallinos, Department of Communication Studies, Concordia University, 7141 Sherbrooke Street West, Montreal, Quebec H4B 1R6, Canada
Tel. (514) 848-2536, (514) 848-2555
Fax (514) 848-3492

Screen Studies Conference
Glasgow, June 25 – 27, 1993
Information: John Logie Baird Centre, Glasgow University, Glasgow G12 8QF, Scotland

Harvard Graduate School of Education, Summer Institute in Media Education
July 31 – August 7, 1993
Discussions will be led by international leaders in media education and faculty members including, Dr. Renee Hobbs, Neil Postman, Barry Duncan and Robert Kubey.
Information: Dr. Renee Hobbs, Babson College, Babson Park, MA, 02157-0310

New York Film Academy Film Making Summer Workshops
Workshops in writing, directing, shooting and editing using 16 mm cameras. Advanced sync-sound, mise-en-scene workshops and private instruction available. College credit available. Tuition: $3,500
Information: NewYork Film Academy, Tribeca Film Center, 375 Greenwich Street, NYC 10013 Tel. 212-941-4007 Fax 212-941-3866

Screening the Past
VIth Australian History and Film Conference
November 30 – December 4, 1993
La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia.
Information: The Convenors, History and Film Conference, Media Centre, La Trobe University, Bundoora 3083 Australia

Announcements

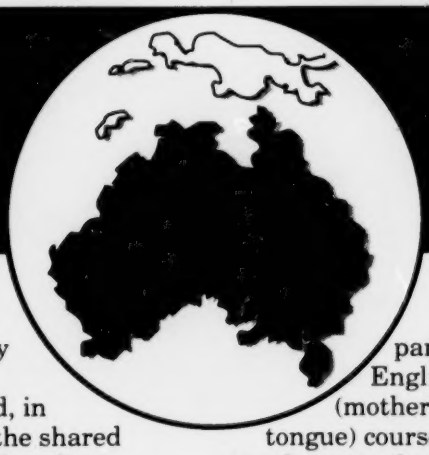
Since the Fall issue of *Media Focus* featured Canada in the World View on Media Education, two new Canadian media associations have been formed:

Media Literacy Nova Scotia
5659 Merkel Street
Halifax, B3K 2J1.
Contact: Pat Kipping,
Tel: (902) 453-2479

Alberta Association of Media Awareness
Department of Culture & Multi-Culturism,
Beaver Building, 5th Floor,
10158 103rd St.,
Edmonton, Alberta T5J 0X6
Contact: Sharon McCann

Note – The Jesuit Communication Project in Toronto has a new telephone number: (416) 488-7280

WORLD VIEW ON MEDIA EDUCATION



Focus on Australia

[The following overview was prepared for Media Focus by Barrie McMahon and Robyn Quin, authors, researchers and media education consultants with the Ministry of Education, Western Australia. They place media education in the broader context of the Australian education system. ed.]

A brief history

The education systems across Australia are similar with differences in detail rather than essence [see BOX 1], and the same can be said of media education. Each state has its own media education syllabus which contains differences in terminology, emphasis and organization but share a similar conceptual core. This similarity can be explained, in part, by the shared history of media education across Australia, for media education in its present form, was a product of the 1960's and 1970's.

One historical influence has been various film courses that occasionally constituted a peripheral part of English (mother-tongue) courses. Another was that the rise of media education courses coincided with the availability of cheaper media production equipment, particularly super-8 movie cameras. This enabled some enthusiastic teachers to complement their film

Australian Teachers of Media

Leadership of teachers in Australia's media education

by Karon Sherarts

As I studied media education in Australia, I was impressed by many things including the on-going support systems which help maintain the place of media studies in education and enhance its quality. In most parts of Australia the momentum for media education occurred at a grassroots level; it was not a top-down mandate. Throughout the country, teachers have played a major role in shaping the conceptual frameworks, development, and implementation of media studies from its emergence in the 1970s to the present. This inclusive process may be one of the key factors in creating Australia's multifaceted support systems and affording some measure of stability to the field.

The national Australian Teachers of Media (ATOM) and Council of Australian Media Education Organizations (CAMEO) are among the strongest links in a support system which also include state-level organizations in surrounding countries. They address national and international issues in media education. ATOM's organizations provide a broad range of services for teachers and are often a catalyst for co-operative ventures.

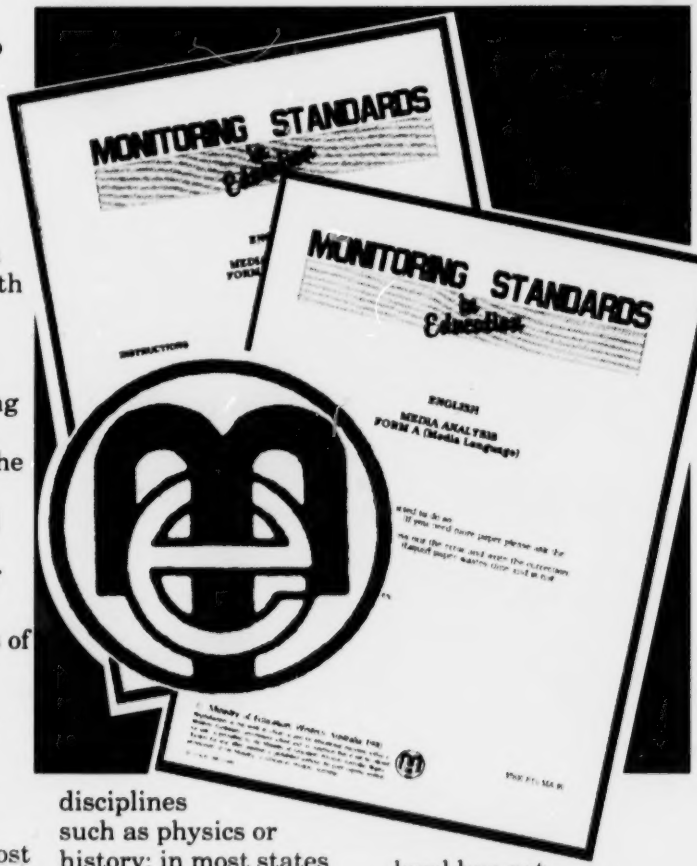
State-level organizations rotate the responsibility for designing and organizing ATOM's biannual national conference. The 1992 forum, "Facing the Future," convened by the Western Australia Teachers of Media in Perth brought together teachers, scholars, lecturers in teacher education programs, ministry of education staff, researchers and others. Presenters and attendees from throughout Australia and overseas - New Zealand, Japan, Europe, Indonesia, the United States and Canada - participated in a rich dialogue.

ATOM's Awards festival recognizes high quality non-feature film and video work in a variety of genres that "successfully straddle the arts and education sectors". The festival also promotes the use of these innovative works by primary and secondary teachers.

Karon Sherarts is a media education consultant based in Minneapolis, MN. who has recently returned from a study tour of Australia made possible by the Media Travel and Study Grant Program supported by Dayton Hudson Foundation on behalf of Dayton's and Target Stores, the General Mills Foundation and the Jerome Foundation. A number of papers which were presented at the ATOM National Media Education Conference in Ocotober, 1992 are available at The Centre for Literacy.

courses with film-making programs or to establish film-making in opposition to film appreciation.

A more general factor was the ethos of the era, characterised by a sense of frustration with the established ways and with the Establishment. Some teachers were searching for added relevance in their classrooms and the burgeoning media environment appeared to offer part of this relevance. The work of Marshall McLuhan encapsulates the ethos of the time.



Characteristics of media education across Australia

Systematic implementation has been most successful at the secondary level, particularly at the senior level where some status is apportioned to media study through formal accredited courses. Despite accreditation, there is still a status difference between media education and the more established disciplines such as physics or history; in most states media education does not count towards entrance into tertiary study, whereas the traditional subjects do. This severely limits any potential for expansion of media education in the secondary years of schooling.

Study of media at primary school level has not developed as effectively or as systematically. Courses exist as do enthusiastic primary school teachers who are implementing effective programs. The effect, however, is not widespread, and is the most significant issue confronting Australian media educators.

Courses tend to mix the practical and conceptual sometimes leading to debate over emphasis, but there tends not to be a polarization in approaches. Currently, the pendulum seems to rest at a point where practical student involvement in the media is seen as a means towards conceptual understanding rather than as an end in itself.

Towards a national framework for education

There is a consistency in the patterns of media education in Australia, and variations that are currently apparent are likely to diminish further as the country moves towards a national framework for education.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

BOX 1

Characteristics of the Australian education system:

- State or territory control of education (six states and two territories)
- Predominantly government school education (approximately 75% of students; the remainder partially government-funded Catholic and independent schools.)
- Similar educational histories across the state and a shared language base. (English)
- Increased interest in development of a national framework for education.

BOX

Australian Teachers of Media (ATOM): Selected activities

- publishes *METRO* magazine and distributes *Media3*, a supplement written by media students in Deaken University's teacher education program;
- prepares film study guides and tapes in cooperation with distributors;
- creates opportunities for networking and professional development locally and state-wide. (In Victoria, ATOM's Extension Education Officer seconded from the Ministry of Education coordinates a state-wide development program);
- convenes local and national conferences;
- hosts an annual film/video awards festival. [KS]

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This framework will shift the focus from teacher input to desirable student outcomes in eight curriculum areas: English, math, health, studies of society, languages other than English, science, the arts and technology. All existing subjects will be slotted into these eight areas, and outcomes will be further divided into eight levels of progress stretching across the twelve years of schooling. Media education is formally recognised in both English and the arts, but most Australian states will use the arts as the umbrella under which media education is taught with some taught as part of English as well.

Advantages of a national framework

National recognition will put media education on the national map. The identification of media outcomes across levels over twelve years of schooling will provide the potential to raise the profile of media education in primary schools. The new initiative gives media education a sharp conceptual focus, for in both the arts and English, outcomes have been framed within the conceptual parameters of cultural studies.

It offers greater clarity in terms of both expectations of students and desired outcomes and a means of accountability in order to ensure that the noble rhetoric of the syllabus is translated into meaningful student understanding. This process will ensure that remedial action can be taken when weaknesses are revealed.

There exists in Australia, a reasonably strong foundation for further development, but a lot of progress still has to be made. It is apparent that the Australian experience has many similarities with the developments in other countries, particularly those in Canada, Wales and Scotland.

B O X

Monitoring Standards in Education: Media Analysis

This report, prepared for the Ministry of Education in June,1992, presented the findings of a sample test of year ten students in Western Australia. Students were tested for their media analysis skills as outlined in the syllabus of year ten English.

Findings

- The large majority of students demonstrated a high level of ability in the fundamental skills of media analysis:
  - to identify the major visual and aural codes
  - to recognize the conventions of the media, e.g. familiar stereotypes.
  - to identify the connotations of selected images.
- Girls are consistently more skilled in media analysis than boys.
- Some groups, namely students from non-English speaking backgrounds and those who are heavy users of tv, have significantly lower levels of media analysis skills than the sample as a whole.
- Students have an inadequate understanding of the social context and social impact of the media.
- Students in the sample group generally showed an inability:
  - to demonstrate the relationship between media texts and the social context and social impact of the media.
  - to recognize the values and attitudes expressed in a media text
  - to recognize the operation of sophisticated positioning devices such as the manipulation of point of view.

The report and samples of evaluation instruments are available at The Centre for Literacy.

Violence and the media: International studies

The media's influence on society in general and on children in particular has prompted research into the depiction of violence on tv and its impact on viewers' perceptions and actions. While a number of individuals argue that there is a direct causal relationship between tv and aggressive and /or violent behaviour, others disagree, pointing to several other contributing factors e.g. cultural indicators, economic indicators and family situations.

The complexity of the issue becomes increasingly obvious with more research into violence and the media. In June 1991, the Institut québécois de recherche sur la culture published **Summary and Analysis of Various Studies on Violence and Television** , a compilation of international research reports What follows are excerpts from some of those reports. (JB)

CANADA : Ministry of Education, Central Ontario Region (July, 1990)

Report of the Violence and Anti-Social Behaviour Committee

This report establishes only an indirect link to media-related violence and violent behaviour. It makes the following recommendations:

- The Ministry of Education and other appropriate ministries [should] consult with the Radio and Television Commission regarding violent media images and their impact on young viewers;
- The Ontario Film Review Board [should] be asked to review the policies in light of recent indications of an increase in violent and anti-social behaviour in young people.

Appended to the Ontario report was research by Quebec's Ministry of Education which refers to studies indicating that violence, particularly in rock videos, could have an impact on violence in schools.

FRANCE: Conseil supérieur de l'audiovisuel (CSA) Directive of May 5, 1989

The CSA considered the concept of freedom of expression as it pertains to tv; however it pointed to the medium's use in the family context. In the scheduling of programs broadcast by public and private television services, the CSA obliges program companies to respect rules regarding protection of the individual, public order and especially children and young people. The Directive is relatively new, so it is too soon to judge its effectiveness.

The CSA rules requires each program company:

- Not to broadcast programs intended for young people which contain scenes that could upset them;
- To ensure that programs broadcast during peak hours are suitable for family viewing;
- Not to broadcast erotic or violent films or programs between 6:00 a.m. and 10:30 p.m., nor to promote such films or programs prior to 8:30 p.m;
- To provide appropriate signals to warn viewers of any program whose content could be offensive, particularly to young people;
- Not to broadcast any film or program that would offend community standards.

GREAT BRITAIN: The BBC (1987)

The BBC has guidelines pertaining to the depiction of tv violence. The Wyatt Committee's report is the result of a pre-established process of consultation established by the BBC about programming policies; the consultation is conducted every five years.

AUSTRALIA: Australian Broadcast Tribunal's report on violence and the media to the Minister for Transport and Communications, Vol. 1V (1990)

Among the findings of this report are:

- The majority (60%) say there is too much violence on tv; this view was expressed most strongly by elderly women and strongly religious people.
- Realistic representations of violence and depictions of real events were perceived to be more violent by a majority of respondents.
- The more respondents identify with the victim, the greater the perceived violence.
- The context in which violence takes place and its justification influences viewers' perceptions. Violent acts by a policeman seem less violent than a mugging. Unnecessary violence is perceived very negatively, explaining why most respondents disapproved of violence in commercials.

The Tribunal's conclusions include the following:

- Individuals must accept a share of the responsibility for their own viewing by establishing personal and consistent codes of conduct.
- Broadcasters must demonstrate proof of responsibility in applying standards and guidelines.
- Governments must ensure that broadcasters are accountable.

The Committee [has] made the following recommendations:

- More precise, easier to apply guidelines are needed within a relatively concise code which should be made available to all concerned.
- Policies regarding appropriate viewing time for adult shows should be clarified and applied stringently.
- Seminars should be held to sensitize all concerned.
- Greater vigilance should be practiced when purchasing programs, particularly from the U.S.

NEW ZEALAND: Broadcasting Standards Authority (1989)

This report addressed only the code respecting advertising and the code respecting programming for children. It does not include any definition of violence, specific information on the application or administration of the guidelines that are found in these codes or penalties for non-compliance.

The code respecting advertising advised that advertising :

- Should not clearly portray violence or aggression.
- Should not encourage anti-social behaviour or depict children behaving in an anti-social manner.
- Should not contain menacing elements.
- Should not show products being used in an unsafe or dangerours manner, except in specific safetyads.
- Should not depict toy weapons which are realistic and can be confused with real ones.

The code respecting violence in programs encourages broadcasters to oberve the following guidelines:

- Consider time of transmission in scheduling programs which contain violence.
- Broadcast carefully items explaining the technique of crime.
- Present news in such a way not to cause unnecssary panic or distress.
- Consider effects on children of any program broadcast during their generally accepted viewing periods.
- Avoid themes dealing with disturbing social and domestic friction and humiliation or mistreatment of children or animals.
- Take responsibility for justifiying violence as an integral part of drama or news coverage.
- Avoid gratuitous use of violence and sexuality and any portrayal designed to encourage extremes of anti-social behaviour.

NEW ZEALAND: Research International (August 1990)

This report, which reviewed perceptions and attitudes of the New Zealand public to media violence, showed that:

- TV violence is perceived as a problem, but tolerance varies according to demographics, the most concerned being elderly women and very religious people. Young people are far more tolerant, suggesting they may be more susceptible to desensitization.
- People do not stop watching violent programs or want them to disappear completely. Despite their concern about degree of violence, they want to continue to have freedom of choice.
- Perceptions about violence are directly related to context. The more explicit the violence and the more the viewer identifies with a character, the greater the perception of violence.

UNESCO REPORT: #102 Mass Communication George Gerbner (1989)

Because of the complexity of the issue and the vastness of the material, Gerbner limited his research to three areas:

- The policies governing representation of violence and terror in the media
- The significance and nature of such representation.
- The impact on the public of such representation and their consequences in terms of thought, action and policy.

Some of his conclusions and observations drawn from a number of research studies dealing with violent content in the media follow:

- Men are over- represented.
- Images of violence consist almost entirely of murders and assaults, which is not borne out by crime statistics.
- Public perceptions about the amount of violence in society is based entirely on what is reported in the media.
- The way in which the media present certain social conflicts and civil disturbances (e.g. racial conflict in the U.S.) is based on good intentions such as reluctance to blame minorities, but this tends to polarize debate and gloss over the real issues.
- Themes and characterizations in drama are remarkably stable; predictably, aggregate measures of tv violence express underlying power relationships in a relatively stable society.
- Force and violence are used to promote respect for law and order and to defend the status quo.
- In Canada, conclusions from inquiries reveal that most scenes of violence and murder appear in foreign programs. Also, the most popular French programs are clearly less violent than their English counterparts.
- As a result of the "symbiotic" relationship between the media and the authorities, those in power succeed in using terrorism to their advantage.

Documents available at the Centre for Literacy.

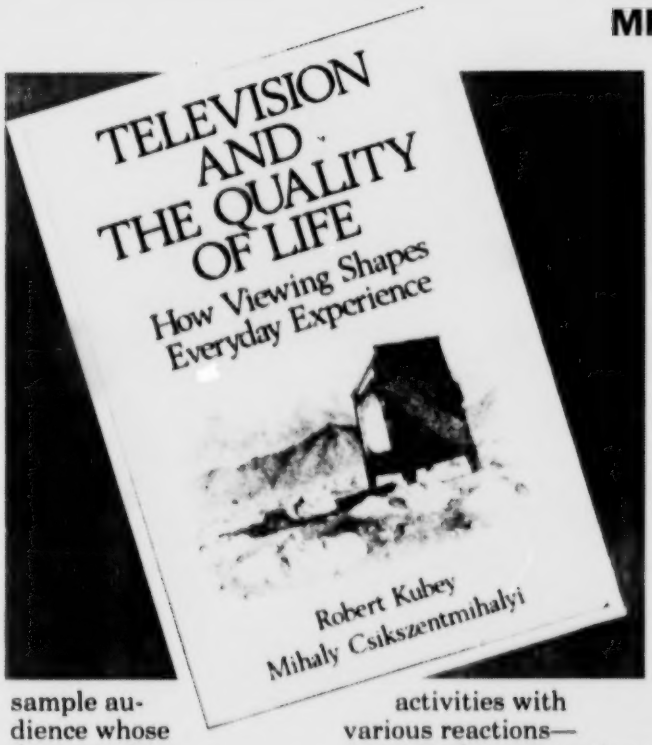
Reviews

Television And The Quality of Life
Robert Kubey and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates (Hillsdale, New Jersey, 1990) 243 pp.

"People were signaled seven times a day, from morning till night. With each signal they filled out a simple form responding to a number of standard psychological measures of mood and mental activity... We found that most viewing involves less concentration and alertness—and is experienced more passively—than just about any other daily activity."
–Robert Kubey,
The New York Times, Arts & Leisure, Sunday, (August 5, 1990):26-7

As media literacy continues to gain prominence in education and society, there is compelling evidence to suggest that interaction with tv is not an isolated activity and that researchers ought not to be drawing conclusions based solely on the act of watching tv. Robert Kubey and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, authors of *Television And The Quality of LIfe* have taken research out of the lab and placed their findings about television viewing in a broader context.

Kubey and Csikszentmihalyi compiled their data based on the actual viewing habits of a



sample audience whose demographics are meant to reflect society in terms of gender, age, education and economic positions. The book describes in detail The Experience Sampling Method (ESM) they used to gather their data.

In an attempt to study television viewers in their natural states and to ensure that the researchers disturb the setting as little as possible, ESM uses beepers and questionnaires to track subjects as they participate in all of their daily activities (eg. hobbies, reading, working, eating, watching television). It correlates these activities with various reactions—degrees of concentration. emotional responses, energy levels and amount of time spent viewing—to determine how the experiences and responses of heavy viewers differ from those of light viewers. Tables, figures and graphics on ESM and the process of information gathering appear throughout the book.

The research methods may provoke some discussion. Media education advocates committed to the qualitative tradition may find themselves at odds with the method described in the book Others, although comfortable with a quantitative approach, may be unfamiliar with what the authors call their "quasi-naturalist approach." One thing remains indisputable — the book offers insights into television which are difficult to ignore about people, their cultures and their viewing habits. (JB)

"But although the viewers' control over the set has increased and television content has become more varied, the question remains whether the time spent in front of the TV set enriches people's lives."
— Robert Kubey, August 5, 1990.

Une Bonne Histoire
(videocassette) co-produced by Centrale de l'enseignement du Québec (CEQ) and Institut d'éducation aux adults (ICEA) January, 1993. Producer, Pierre Greco

This 30-minute video, valuable for promoting media literacy, was produced by Pierre Greco who used professional actors and the CEQ's own studio facilities. In the style of a light tv drama–romantic interest, interpersonal politics, and all–*Une Bonne Histoire* creates a behind-the-scenes look at the industry and the process of producing television news. Entertaining and enlightening, it attempts to demystify the medium by revealing the impact of production variables such as camera angle, time as a convention, the editing process, as well as ideological influences The video is accompanied by a teachers' guide, making the package useful for in-service training as well as for the senior secondary classroom. It is currently available in French only. (JB)

Information:
Jocelyne Gauvin, CEQ
Tel. (418) 627-8888

Television, other media and the family

On February 19, 1993, 24 people representing 22 organizations involved in family, education and community services met in Montreal to discuss the impact of media on society. A joint effort of l'Association nationale des téléspectateurs et des téléspectatrices and le Service aux collectivités de l'Université de Québec à Montréal (UQAM), this meeting was a response to ***Famille et télévision,*** *a document published in 1992 by the Conseil de la famille.*

This occasion provided a rare opportunity for discussion of the media among people from diverse interest groups representing Quebec francophones and anglophones.

Participants shared experiences, questions and concerns about how we can better understand and cope with the cultural explosion which characterizes our media society. Despite their common interest in the media participants did not always share a common concept of media literacy. Given the diversity of backgrounds these varied perceptions and concerns were predictable; however, they signalled the necessity to establish open lines of communication in order to create some shared understanding and a common vocabulary.

Dealing with violence in the media

There was an emphasis on tv and its excessive–often gratuitous–use of violence. Although participants did not agree on how to cope with the situation, there was general agreement that we need to explore how to use tv to teach children the concepts of good and evil.

Education of parents and teachers, as well as students, was stressed. The needs of single-parent families, the unemployed and those living below the poverty line call for special attention since the majority of these groups are not privileged and do not attend conferences, open meetings or even parent-teacher interviews. Without effective outreach and education, the next generation of school-leavers will not be more enlightened than the current generation.

Discussion returned repeatedly to the role of parents who must assume some of the responsibility. TV must no longer be considered simply a babysitter. It often reflects and communicates global cultural changes. Young people develop their own sense of values–often created by the media–which may not correspond to traditional values. Participants felt these issues must be acknowledged in the home.

In response to a call for action from around the table for concrete action rather than more reflection, a working group of eight was formed and met three weeks later to explore the issues further. The complexity of the situation was underscored here. While there is an acute need to establish a common agenda in moving towards a more media literate society, there are no easy solutions, and the process will be a difficult one. Despite the difficulties, however, the efforts are being made. One of these is an invitational conference in June intended to formalize local action. [see below] (JB)

Université du Québec à Montréal
Service aux collectivités

The Centre for Literacy/
Le Centre d'Alphabétisation

June 14 -16, 1993

AWARENESS AND KNOWLEDGE: TOOLS FOR LIVING WITH THE MEDIA

A bilingual media literacy conference* for educators, parents, people working in the community and media professionals.

CONFERENCE OBJECTIVES

- To provide the first opportunity ever for parents, teachers researchers and media professionals from Quebec's two linguistic groups to participate in open dialogue about media education.
- To encourage parents, educators, media professionals and people who work in the community to initiate concrete action in media education.

A free public discussion will launch this invitational conference.

WHAT IS MEDIA LITERACY AND WHY SHOULD I CARE IF I'M NOT A TEACHER?

SPEAKERS:

Laurier Lapierre, President,
The Broadcasting Industry's National Action Group for a less Violent Society

John Pungente, S.J.
The Jesuit Communication Project, Toronto

Lorraine Pagé, President,
Centrale de l'enseignement du Québec

Date: Monday, June 14, 1993
Time: 7:30 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.
Place: Dawson College, Atwater Campus, 5B-16
4001 De Maisonneuve W., Montreal, Quebec

Please R.S.V.P. 931-8731 Loc. 1415
*Simultaneous translation available.

SUMMER 1993 Vol. 9 No. 2

Literacy across the curriculum

including Medi Focus

Connecting literacy in the schools, community and workplace

Literacy and technology: changing our concepts

We mouth platitudes about living in an age when access to, and control over, information constitute a new form of capital. If the metaphor is viable, then we are in the process of creating a new underclass of the dispossessed and the exploited in all those adults who lack the skills to access, choose and use the information that is multiplying faster than the most literate among us can comprehend.

Some of the most committed of literacy advocates are participating in this process by clinging to definitions of literacy that remain fixed on print and text at a time when information is being stored and transmitted electronically, when notions of linear development are being challenged, and when young learners are frequently in advance of their teachers in understanding the possibilities.

The avant-garde of literature are writing hyperfiction, novels on computers, which have warranted two lengthy reviews by Robert Coover in *The New York Times Book Review* in the past year, the most recent on August 29, 1993. The other end of the spectrum from basic literacy, you say.

But then, only one month earlier the Office of Technology Assessment in Washington published *Adult Literacy and New Technologies: Tools for a Lifetime*. Despite its being focused on American literacy policy and programs, the underlying analysis and forecasts in this study speak to every literacy policy-maker, administrator, and teacher in the Western world. (A colleague from UNESCO last year noted with sadness that in many third world countries "access to technology" means scrounging enough pencils and paper for a class.)

In eight clear well-argued chapters, this study assesses the current and potential impact of technologies for literacy. The authors begin with the changing definition of literacy, provide a statistical picture of American needs and spare no mercy in analysing the "patchwork of programs" and even "more fragmented system" that has grown out of U.S. federal literacy policy. They conclude that "the potential of technology for both learners and programs is not being exploited" [See BOX, p.2]. They envision a future when coordinated planning of hardware acquisition, software development, teacher training and social policy provide adults with learning opportunities anyplace, anytime.

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The Centre for Literacy Montreal, Quebec

Literacy Across the Curriculum

The Centre for Literacy
3040 Sherbrooke Street West,
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H3Z 1A4
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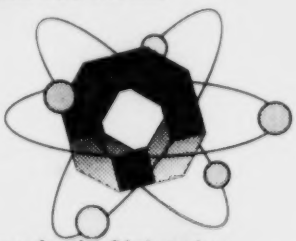
The Centre for Literacy/Le Centre d'Alphabétisation is a resource centre and teacher-training project designed to provide training, research, and information services which promote and link the advancement of literacy in the schools, the workplace and the community. The Centre gratefully acknowledges the support of the National Literacy Secretariat, Human Resources & Labour Canada and Dawson College.
President: David W. Perks



Literacy for the 21st century
Literacy encompasses a complex set of abilities to understand and use the dominant symbol systems of a culture for personal and community development. In a thechnological society, the concept of literacy is expanding to include the media and electronic text, in addition to alphabetic and number systems. These abilities vary in different social and cultural contexts according to need and demand. Individuals must be given life-long earning opportunities to move along a continuum that includes the reading and writing, critical understanding, and decision-making abilities they need in their community.

BOX

Advantages of Technology for Adult Learners

Reaching learners outside of classrooms
- With portable technology, adults can learn almost anywhere, any time, and can use small parcels of time more efficiently.
- Technology can carry instruction to non-school settings — workplaces, homes, prisons, or the community.
- Adults can be served who would otherwise be left out because of barriers such as inconvenient class scheduling or lack of childcare or transportation.
- Learning at home can be more convenient and private for those who would be stigmatized by attending a literacy program.

Using learning time efficiently
- Learners can move at their own pace, have greater control over their own learning, and make better use of their learning time.
- Learners can handle some routine tasks more quickly through such processes as computer spell checking.
- Many learners advance more quickly with computers or interactive videodiscs than with conventional teaching methods.

Sustaining motivation
- Novelty factor can be a "drawing card."
- Technology can be more engaging, can add interest to repetitive learning tasks.
- Importance of computers in society can enhance the status of literacy instruction.
- Privacy and confidentiality are added to the learning environment, reducing embarrassment adults often experience.
- Technology-based learning environments do not resemble those of past school failures.
- Intense, nonjudgmental drill-and-practice are available for those who need it.
- Instantaneous feedback and assessment are provided.

Individual instruction
- Computers can serve as "personal tutors"— instruction and schooling can be individualized without one-on-one staffing; suitable for open-entry, open-exit programs.
- Materials and presentation formats can be customized to suit different learning styles, interests or workplace needs.
- Images and sound can help some adults learn better, especially those who cannot read text well.
- Computers with digitized and synthesized speech can help with pronunciation and vocabulary.
- Adults with learning disabilities and certain physical disabilities can be accommodated.

Providing access to information tools
- Adults need to learn to use today's electronic tools for assessing information.
- Adults believe familiarity with computers will make them more employable.

SOURCE: Office of Technology Assessment 1993
Adult Literacy and New Technologies: Tools for a Lifetime, OTA July 1993, p.8

1 On restoring hope in education

...It is impossible to educate in a climate of cultural pessimism, impossible to cultivate serious motivation. Education demands allegiance to the most archaic conception of time. We tell children that if they get through twelve years - maybe more - of school, they'll see the rewards some twenty years down the line. The amount of delayed gratification inherent in education made sense when the society thought in terms of generational time. But kids now grow up in a world in which people change their jobs every few years and their relationships every few months; they assess their success in the workplace and in the economy by the day, if not by the minute. Children are left with no sense of permanence, and thus no understanding of why they should make a long-term investment in their own education...

...Particularly now that the disenfranchised part of our population has some reasonable expectation of access to the educational system, our entire society depends on it more than ever before. We have to struggle with our own sense of pessimism as adults and create an environment that is much more about hope.

I want to close with this notion of hope. One of the ugliest changes in grammar that have taken place during the twentieth century is the use of the word "hopefully." As you know, "hopefully" is an adverb and is properly used only to modify a verb. Nowadays, however, it is used in common parlance as a surrogate for the words "I hope." Why has that usage become acceptable to our ears? Because it fits absolutely with a cultural shift, a tendency to displace responsibility. Saying "Hopefully, the school system will be better" is very different from saying "I hope the school system will be better." Because if you say "I hope," the next question is, What are you going to do about it?...

Leon Botstein, "Educating in a Pessimistic Age," *Harper's*, August 1993, pp.16-19.

2 On life as grammar

Information theory shows that there are good reasons why the forces of antichance are as universal as the forces of chance, even though entropy has been presented as the overwhelmingly more powerful principle. **The proper metaphor for the life process may not be a pair of rolling dice or a spinning roulette wheel, but the sentences of a language, conveying information that is partly predictable and partly unpredictable.** These sentences are generated by rules that make much out of little, producing a boundless wealth of meaning from a finite store of words; they enable language to be familiar yet surprising, constrained yet unpredictable within its constraints.

Sense and order, the theory says, can prevail against nonsense and chaos. The world need not regress toward the simple, the uniform, and the banal, but may advance in the direction of richer and more complex structures, physical and mental. Life, like language, remains "grammatical." The classical view of entropy implied that structure is the exception and confusion the rule. The theory of information suggests instead that order is entirely natural: grammatical man inhabits a grammatical universe.

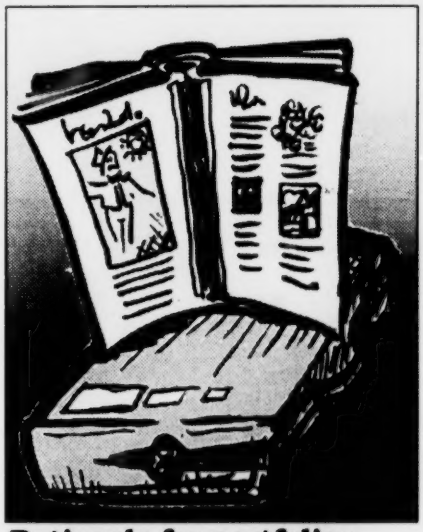
Jeremy Campbell, "Foreword," *Grammatical Man: Information, Entropy, Language, and Life*. Simon and Shuster (New York, 1982) p.12.

Portfolios: alternative assessment

[The search for ways of assessing student progress other than tests and exams has lead to research and classroom experiments with alternatives that involve demonstration and performance. One of the most widely-promoted alternatives is portfolio, a collection of student work that has been a standard form of assessment in the fine arts for many years but is now beginning to be considered appropriate in other fields.

For teachers and trainers who are interested in knowing how portfolios can be used in place of or in addition to more traditional types of assessment, there are networks to link practitioners and researchers. One of the best is *Portfolio News*, a newsletter published at the University of California. This quarterly contains articles, information, and lists of sites where portfolios are being investigated and which are willing to share their experience and resources.

The following overview on portfolios is abstracted from a module produced by the National Council on Measurement in Education. Entitled *Using Portfolios of Student Work in Instruction and Assessment*, it is one of the best documents currently available as an introduction or guide. Researched and written by Judith A. Arter and Vicki Spandel at the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory in Portland OR., the module is intended to clarify the notion of portfolio which, the authors point out, has become a popular buzzword without always being extremely clear. Arter and Spandel provide a rationale, a definition, characteristics, pitfalls, and design considerations. This abstract does not include design considerations which will be included in the Fall issue of LAC.] L.S.



Rationale for portfolios

The current concern over the use of multiple-choice and other structured format tests for assessing many important student outcomes has lead to a search for alternatives that will accomplish the following:

- **Capture a richer array of what students know and can do.**
- **Portray the processes by which students produce work** as well as get the right answer.
- **Align our assessments with what we consider important outcomes** in order to communicate the right message to students and others about what we value.
- **Have realistic contexts for production of work,** so we can examine what students know and can do in real-life situations.
- **Provide continuous and ongoing information on how students are doing.**
- **Integrate assessment with instruction** to encourage student engagement in and responsibility for learning.

Definition of a portfolio

A student portfolio is a purposeful collection of student work that tells the story of the student's efforts, progress, or achievement in (a) given area(s). This collection must include student participation in selection of portfolio content; the guidelines for selection; the criteria for judging merit; and evidence of student self-reflection. This definition supports the goals outlined in the rationale above.

Elaboration of terms:

Purposeful: Without purpose, a portfolio is just a folder of student work. Different purposes could result in different portfolios. For example, if students are to be evaluated on the basis of the portfolio, (e.g. for admission to college), then they would probably choose the final version of their best work. If the purpose is to see how students go about doing a project, then a complete record of all activities drafts, revisions, etc, might be kept. If the portfolio is used to celebrate accomplishment, the purpose is as a keepsake, and personal favourites might be chosen. Because of potential differences in content and approach, users must have a clear idea of the purpose.

Student self-reflection: Self-reflection is necessary because the purposeful nature of the portfolio presupposes a rationale for selection of work for inclusion. This requires an analysis of the work and what it demonstrates. Recording this self-reflection in the form of a "meta-cognitive" letter or oral report documents and encourages this type of student performance. Self-reflection is one thing that makes a portfolio instructional.

Criteria for judging merit: Criteria give us a schema for thinking about student performance. In the absence of all criteria, how do we know what sort of work a student has accomplished through the year? How does the student know whether to be satisfied, ecstatic, or dismayed? How does the student or teacher know what goals to set for next time? And how do various audiences know what to make of the performance as a whole?

Setting clear criteria has benefits. Those who set the criteria must think very carefully about what they value in strong performance, and this helps clarify instructional goals and expectations. To the extent that criteria are shared, students are made part of the evaluation and receive power to recognize strong performance, identify problems in weak performance, and improve performance. Finally, clear criteria are a means for us to judge performance.

Guidelines for selection: These provide direction on what to place in the portfolio. They can vary from extremely structured (e.g. everyone will include an essay comparing characters in *Romeo and Juliet* to those in *Great Expectations*) to a completely unstructured procedure (students can choose whatever they want). A more moderate approach would specify categories of entries (one research paper, one multi-media project, one "best" piece, etc) with students free to select work for each category.

Student participation in selection: Although it is possible for someone else to assemble a student's work into a portfolio, the true instructional value and power comes when students use criteria and self-reflection to decide what they want to show about themselves and why.

Portfolios as assessment devices: The definition presented here implies assessment. Students cannot assemble a portfolio without using clearly defined targets in a systematic way to paint a picture of their own efforts, growth, and achievement. This is the essence of assessment, and an example of how it can be used to improve and not merely monitor achievement.

Composite portfolios: This is parallel to an individual student portfolio except that it tells the story for a group. It contains the work of more than one student. It could be used to demonstrate the impact a school or program is having on students in general, to demonstrate what is being taught, etc. The requirements for compiling composite portfolios are a little different from those for individual ones. A separate module is available on composites.

Potential problems with portfolios as assessment devices

Just because portfolios have the potential instructional and assessment advantages outlined above, does *not* guarantee that their use *will* automatically have these effects. In actuality, if not done well and interpreted properly, portfolios can mislead as much as, if not more than, the results of fixed-choice tests.

Portfolios, as performance assessment devices, can run into the following problems:

Representativeness: The work may not be representative of what the student knows and can do. We have to be sure that what is included provides a complete picture of the phenomenon we are trying to portray. For example, we cannot make statements about students' ability to communicate in general if all we've collected are formal speeches presented to a class audience. Likewise, we cannot say that a composite portfolio shows what typical instruction is like in our board if all we've collected are the best lessons from the best teachers.

Criteria: The criteria used may not reflect the most relevant or useful dimensions of the task. Criteria must be not only clear but good. Good criteria represent a conception of what is valued in an expert performance. To develop good criteria, one needs a great deal of content expertise.

Authentic work and extraneous response requirements: Authenticity depends on several factors.

- What is meant by authentic? The content of a portfolio will mirror the emphasis in the curriculum and the classroom. For example, if a curriculum emphasizes phonics and teachers concentrate on phonics, then the samples for the portfolio are likely to reflect phonics. Is this authentic? An authentic reflection of classroom work or an authentic representation of ability to read in real life?
- The work assigned to students must match the target. For example, if students do only computational worksheets in math, work samples may not be available that show math problem-solving ability.

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- Portfolios must not be seen as an add-on to the "real" instruction going on in the classroom.

- Sometimes students are unable to demonstrate what they can really do because some part of the task requires skills that do not really have anything to do with the abilities being examined. Take as an example an "exhibition" in which a group of high school students demonstrated their ability to conduct a symposium discussion. This discussion required reading two very difficult articles and getting words in edgewise in a fairly large group. Would a shy student be at a disadvantage? Would personality and reading ability, extraneous to the ability being measured (to think), affect performance? Portfolios do not automatically imply authenticity.

Differences in interpretations: The perception of the significance of portfolio depends on who is doing the analysis.

[The module on portfolios is accompanied by a series of annotated bibliographies on portfolios in general and on assessment alternatives in various subject areas including reading, math, science, and social studies. The materials can be ordered directly from the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 101 SW Main Street, #500, Portland OR 97204.]

All documents are available at The Centre for Literacy.

BOX

Canadian project developing adult literacy portfolios

Portfolios are also being investigated as a viable alternative to standardized testing in adult literacy programs. The National Literacy Secretariat has funded a three-phase project under the direction of Dr. Maurice Taylor in Ottawa.

Objectives:

- To survey current educational literature on literacy portfolios and consult with experts to identify the major tenets of this concept.
- To demonstrate the use of portfolio development in three different literacy environments: workplace, institutional, and community-based.

Project phases:

- Set-up of an advisory committee to review literature and develop interview questions for the field.
- Interviews with personnel from workplace, institutional, and community-based settings in six locations across Canada. Local resource people will help collect information and develop a model literacy portfolio assessment tool.
- Preparation of a discussion paper outlining characteristics of literacy portfolio development and why it should be considered as an alternative assessment technique.
- Prototype of a portfolio to enable learners and trainees to play a central role in their assessment of progress.

For information: Dr. Maurice Taylor, (613) 564-5439; Fax (613) 564-9098.

continued from page 1

The study presents alternatives that are difficult to imagine in the climate of retrenchment that has gripped North America. And yet, it is equally difficult to imagine staying on the current course, training some people for outmoded options and leaving many without any options at all.

For Canadians, the prospects of technology in literacy are even bleaker. We seem to have coined our own definition of ABE—**a**utonomy **b**efore **e**ffectiveness. Each province, each board, each organization is more preoccupied with its own needs and maintaining its own territory than with sharing or networking, with or without technology. Not only do few programs have access to technology, or teachers trained to provide it, but most funding explicitly prohibits the purchase of equipment.

With federal funding, Canada has already developed a national adult literacy database (NALD) that can provide many of the linking and support services recommended by the OTA report. But NALD, too, is struggling for survival trying to prove its value in an environment that is struggling with a definition of literacy still unconnected to technology.

The OTA report concentrates on adult literacy and basic skills, but technology is becoming central to the entire education process, from early childhood on. Unfortunately, too many of us inside education are still cocooned from the electronic world.

As with any other tools, technology alone will not transform learning. But used with insight by well-trained teachers, nothing has ever promised a greater return for a greater number. It's time to expand our conception of literacy. L.S.

Gzowski Invitational Tournament — first-class début in Montreal

Francesca Arpin, coordinator of Quebec PGI, with Peter Gzowski

It never rains on a Peter Gzowski Invitational. According to Shelley Ambrose, the intrepid organizer behind the 50 tournaments that have seen Gzowski raise more than $2 million for Canadian literacy since 1986, they have never been rained out. They have encountered a blizzard in the Yukon which forced the players to construct a miniature course through the corridors of their hotel. But rain, not once!

The tradition held on August 9 when Peter teed off on a cloudless, humidity-free Monday at the Ile-Perrot Golf Course for the first tournament ever held on behalf of Quebec literacy. Despite only three months to organize, Literacy Partners of Quebec, with the unflagging administrative support of The Montreal Gazette as corporate sponsor, hosted a memorable barbecue the previous evening at John Abbott College followed by a perfect golf event the next day.

The final accounting is not yet in, but proceeds will be made available during the coming year to Quebec literacy groups for small projects through a grant-application process.

Details on criteria for applications will be made public by Literacy Partners of Quebec (LPQ) by early October.

For information: Isa Helfield (514) 931-8731, local 1413.

THINGS THAT I NEED*

I need to open my eyes
a little wider and farther.
I need to get up
and go outside
to the streets
to get educated.
I need to study
everything I do,
everything around me.
I need to listen
very carefully
before I speak.
I need to keep walking
down Main Street,
from life to death
Or from death to life.
I need to work
on what I enjoy doing.
I need to use everything I have.
I need to open up my consciousness
just a little bit more,
And then more and more.
I need to give
what I have to give.
I need to say
what I have to say.
I need to realize so many things:
that this is a beautiful night,
that in every night there are stars
that light up the ways
so I can see more clearly my destiny,
and that everything is temporary.
I need to stop
to keep pretending
that everything is all right.
I need to do something now, it's urgent!
I need to move on now,
before the night comes.
So, hasta la vista!

R. J. (Garrobo)M. 16-6-92.
(student in an adult literacy class,
High School of Montreal)

* This poem was chosen as an example of outstanding work by a local student for inclusion in the program book of the Quebec PGI. Unfortunately, eight lines of the original were accidentally omitted, changing the substance of the poem. The organizers regret the error, and have asked that the full text appear here with their apology to the author, Jacobo Garrobo.

Teaching editorials, part 2

Each fall, The Centre for Literacy and *The Montreal Gazette* Educational Services, co-sponsor an editorial opinion writing contest for senior high school and cegep students.

In response to teachers' requests for guidelines, we published in the last issue an overview of the editorial page; in this issue, we present the OpEd page.

Prepared by Doug Sweet of *The Gazette* in December 1992, the materials are reprinted in two parts with permission. We invite teachers to use them with acknowledgment.

COMMENT

DIALOGUE

A column of commentary and opinion open to readers

This is your space — a place for commentary by readers

TED MOORE

I have spent much of my life struggling to protect the Cree way of life in northern Quebec. That struggle to protect our lands, waters, fish and animals from the encroachments of massive hydro dams has been a frustrating exercise, to say the least. Where you used to find an area — it is gone forever. You lose archeological sites, burial grounds, wet lands, spawning areas for fish and caribou calving grounds. Vegetation deteriorates. Mercury gets into macroorganisms and contaminates the food chain. Animal bird and fish species disappear.

Recently, I visited another people facing similar dangers. In the tropical rainforest of Colombia's Pacific coast, just south of Panama, 110 000 Embera and Waunan Indians, one of the world's last hunting-and-gathering societies, could soon be gone forever, just like the flooded forests and dissipated rivers around James Bay. And as in James Bay, the government of Canada has a role to play.

I was a member of an Assembly of First Nations delegation to Colombia in October. We had been invited by the National Organization of Indigenous Peoples of Colombia (ONIC), which represents Colombia's 500 000 native people. With me were Kenrick Venne, vice-president of international relations for the Assembly of First Nations, and Chief Ron Ignace of Shuswap Nation in B.C.

Colombia has a patchwork of Indian reserves, similar to those in Canada. Many land disputes remain unsettled, leaving indigenous peoples traditional territories open to incursions by outsiders. For indigenous people everywhere, the preservation of culture is dependent on a land base. In Colombia, this land base is uncertain, leaving native people unprotected.

The Colombian constitution, passed by a constituent assembly in July 1991, recognizes rights of indigenous peoples, including the autonomous administration of Indian territories.

Despite these guarantees of aboriginal rights, our delegation learned that more than 500 indigenous leaders have been murdered (of 1% total) in under circumstances involving land disputes. Although these crimes have been denounced and brought to the attention of government authorities, most have not been investigated. This is not surprising, as the police and the army are often involved in these crimes, according to human rights organizations.

Even when members of police suspects are arrested, they are tried in military courts, away from public scrutiny.

We repeatedly heard the complaint that although Colombia has a model constitution in paper, it is not respected in practice.

One example is the Colombian government's Pacific Plan to exploit the rainforest in Choco, stretching down Colombia's Pacific coast. Although the constitution requires the participation of indigenous peoples in the design of developments on their traditional territories, this has been ignored by the government.

The Pacific Plan includes gold and platinum mining, the extraction of hardwoods, oil and fish, hydroelectric dams and a network of highways, including a so-called "land link" between Colombia's Atlantic and Pacific coasts.

The planned are rural boom, tourist facilities and a southern extension of the Pan-American Highway from Panama. According to research by organizations in Choco, large tracts of land, as well as logging, fishing and mining rights, have already been purchased by foreign and multinational companies.

Background

We also publish analyses and commentary from a variety of sources about everything from war in the Balkans to Canada's economic prospects.

PETER HILLMORE
LONDON OBSERVER

BAIDOA, Somalia — Ali Mahdi is montarch of all he surveys. And that is his problem. He calls himself the president of Somalia and the prospect from his Palace in Mogadishu is bleak indeed. It looks out on a bevy of ruined buildings, almost levelled by interminable and vindictive shelling.

A few yards away, in the makeshift shelter among the rubble is a hospital for victims of the civil war. Young men, young boys even, hobble round on rickety crutches, legs missing or deformed — all from gunshot wounds or from mines. Travel about in Somalia and you wonder what all the fighting is about, why anyone should bother any more to wage control of a ruined land.

Take Baidoa, where the American soldiers have gone to bring relief to the starving and, inter alia, to relieve the town from siege. It is the third largest town in the country, four hours' drive from Mogadishu along a monotonously straight road across very flat countryside. Two-thirds of the way along the road a couple of giant rocks, like Ayers rock in Australia, jut up to break the monotony.

Nomadic families walk along with camels and cattle, their only property. There is the odd ramshackle collection of a few huts made from wood and twigs. Apart from that, nothing.

You are so numb with the heat and the tedium that Baidoa itself catches you almost by surprise. Suddenly a few houses appear, low built with mud and brick walls. It is like a wild west town in cowboy films — one main street, a market square, that's all. The road continues after the town stops.

It could never have been very much to look at permanently poor, always dusty. Now there is nothing to look at. Buildings have been ruined. There are cripples but no hospital. The only signs of modernity are the numerous feeding centres and the flags of Somalia's only thriving industry, the aid industry. Care, Concern, all the contrived names and flags of compassion.

But fight over it they do. The bitter bloodshed in the town in the past weeks has been not just the work of the hoodlum element, intent solely on looting and mayhem (aid workers call these gunmen the "shoe shine boys" because that was the kind of job they had before they exchanged their brushes for guns). A lot of it has had a political motive, fights between rival parties jockeying for power and authority before the task of rebuilding the country ever begins.

The United Somali Congress, the Somali Democratic Front — all the names all the initials of the various movements in Somalia struggling against each other could imply different political stances, differing visions about the direction the country should take. One wants a market economy, another wants a socialist utopia. But this reasonable assumption is completely wrong. You cannot use reason when assessing this country.

All the parties want the same thing — power — and their rallying cries contain no policies, all slogans, only clan allegiances. There is no difference in the outlook of the United Somali Congress General Aidid faction and the USC Ali Mahdi faction. Colonel Omar Jess and Mohamed Said Hersi Morgan — two other warlords — have the same aims.

Whither Ross Perot? Read it here

JIMMY CARTER
LOS ANGELES TIMES

As I watched — as the Marines landed on the beaches of east Africa, greeted by network anchors and scores of exhausted relief workers. For the moment, at least, distant Mogadishu has found its way into the front page and into our kitchen table conversation.

All of this could have been avoided. That is not to say that the U.S. mission in Somalia is not worthwhile; it may be the only to prevent there than a million Somalis from starving to death. But there is a lesson to be learned from Somalia, and we might have averted tragedy by learning it earlier.

We cannot ignore the problems that plague so many African countries — war, poverty, disease — and hope that they will go away quietly. The U.S. Congress had the chance earlier this year to approve $11 million for emergency food aid to Somalia as part of an omnibus foreign-aid bill that did not pass the Senate.

The obvious questions are these: How do we address these problems? How do we break Africa's cycle of underdevelopment and armed conflict? How can we overcome political opposition to foreign assistance?

We began by meeting the basic needs of children, the next generation of Africans. We can build statistics by providing them with the health care, nutrition, clean water and education that all children should be able to take for granted.

There is a misconception here and in other countries that it would be all but impossible to provide these basic services for a continent of impoverished children. First, not all Africans are poor. In fact, Africa as a whole has made steady progress and only recently began sliding back into poverty, largely because of falling commodity prices, armed build-ups and foreign debt.

The world we get serious about meeting the continent's basic needs, the issues that task will be.

Second, the cost of such a venture is not prohibitive. In an annual State of the World's Children report released this month, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) estimates that seven existing technologies would take $15 billion a year to meet the basic needs of children

DON MACPHERSON

Quebec

Here, you'll read all about the politics of the province

Well, ever Las Vegas in its increasingly desperate and more or less imaginative search for new ways of separating citizens from their money, the Quebec government is taking the plunge into casino gambling.

Oh, sure, the new casinos in Montreal and Quebec Charlevoix Counties are supposed to lure tourists from out of the province. But there's been no mention of any "non-Quebec residents only" rule to keep local welfare recipients from succumbing to the temptation to feed the month's cheque into the slot machines.

And not many out-of-province high-rollers will pass up a junket to the balmy Bahamas in February in favor of a windswept island in the middle of the icy St. Lawrence.

As for rugged, rural Charlevoix County, the only reason for putting a casino there is as a favor to Raymond Malenfant, union buster and Liberal supporter, whose Manoir Richelieu just happens to be the largest hotel in the area.

Dear ones opened

It's ironic to think that the door was opened for this latest government initiative by legalized gambling by a man who first came to public attention as a vice busting lawyer in the wide-open Montreal of the early 1950s.

For it was Jean Drapeau who later, as mayor of Montreal, introduced Canada's first government run lottery in 1969 to help pay for the world's fair he had brought to Montreal the previous year.

And the Montreal casino will be housed in one of the fair's former pavilions on the man-made island in the St. Lawrence that Drapeau had built for the fair.

But what once were vices are now revenue sources. And it turns out that when Drapeau and his partner Pax Plante were shutting down the floor games in the 1950s, they weren't so much eliminating vice as eliminating the future government's competition.

In the Godfather films, the godfather's greatest source of power was the public officials he bought, which made it possible for him to satisfy the public's needs without official interference.

Own armed muscle

Now the politicians have taken over from the godfathers. The government is providing the formerly illicit pleasures and reaping all the profits for itself.

Montreal used to be known as a city of churches. Let's make it known instead as a city of bingos, gambling houses and where to rent ex- and shooting galleries and crack fingers where you can buy and consume the drug of your choice, all under nice, safe, clean government-controlled conditions with condoms and new hypodermic needles provided at no extra charge.

Some of the revenue could be used to finance a new government agency to provide short-term, high-interest loans to high-risk folks who get into these new government services too deeply.

We could call this agency the Society for Loan-sharking the Quebec Economy.

All unthinkable? So was legalized gambling in Quebec, not so long ago.

This column is by a freelancer. It runs once a week.

JEAN-CLAUDE LECLERC

Seeing their soldiers protecting food relief in Somalia, most Canadians feel proud. But even with the withdrawal from Cyprus, some are asking if Canada can afford to send peacekeepers throughout the world. It is an issue of political significance for the Canadian Forces' future and the country's foreign policy.

Since 1948 Canada has sent a total of 130 000 troops on more than 35 United Nations missions. More operations have been well received at home and abroad; the Canadian Armed Forces now have a special reputation. While Canada enjoys a rare and much envied objective, Ottawa still hesitates. With local conflicts multiplying in the world, it is time to pull back as if our services were no longer desirable? Shouldn't we rather contribute to the definition of a new, effective security system?

U.S. President-elect Bill Clinton has advocated a UN rapid deployment force able to intervene in disputes and future suppress the idea of a special fund for peace operations. Shouldn't Canada reflect back such new international possibilities — less

2

resilient of non-imperialism than interventions, masterminded by one great power.

Canadian forces have developed a unique intervening attitude for politics of crisis or natural disasters, communication, diplomatic and community actions [illegible] give them an advantage not many other

public services have. The armed forces should not be abolished as some pacifists dream, but transformed into international police agents and civil organizations.

Four such overwhelming changes may create a gloomy mood in an often conservative military establishment. On the other hand, nothing is new for the troops, except than preparing for a war that won't happen, or spending taxpayers' money on costly if not outdated exercises and equipment.

In Ottawa, some say the countries won't be able to engage in many peace operations unless manpower and spending are increased. In fact, the army's budget has never been so fat. It is more a problem of priorities than of resources. The Department of National Defence is taking a long time to devise a post-Cold War policy, and politicians hesitate to slow down flows of wage contracts intended [illegible] to create many [illegible] jobs.

The DND cannot serve as a political cover for military industries having trouble exporting their [illegible] and probably too. Nor will Canadians gain by defending jobs and bases that only delay real development programs. What will there be a public debate to decide which bases and programs to close and which ones to keep for civil emergency, paramilitary training and normal defence purposes?

There are some ideas.

Thus, Canada and Japan could soon open a joint centre to train soldiers in peacekeeping operations. The idea proposed by Canada Japan [illegible] a high-powered study group by the two countries aims at creating a dialogue possible in Japan and Japan a world image as a non-belligerent power. The panel recommends establishing such a centre at the Pearson College of the Pacific in Victoria. Likewise, it suggests Ottawa should offer such opportunities to other countries as well as Nordic Society doesn't ask more for it. Canadian base. That their response defining which peacemaking role a will prevail in the world.

The end of nuclear threat has opened the door to many new issues for which the United Nations is left without means of rapid intervention. Now that

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THE OP-ED PAGE

This is the commentary page. It is known in the industry as the Op-Ed page because it appears opposite the editorial page. Here, the newspaper offers readers informed commentary on issues of the day. The views expressed on this page do not necessarily agree with those of the editorial columns.

1 Columns

This is a column — an analysis or opinion piece written by one person who may or may not agree with the newspaper's editorials. Columns have picture bylines — photographs of the columnist.

Staff columnists writing for this page are Don Macpherson (Quebec affairs) and William Johnson (national affairs). Editor-in-chief Norman Webster writes a column for the Saturday paper.

Not all columns are about politics. Ombudsman Robert Walker's column appears on Monday. Editor emeritus Edgar Andrew Collard's historical column is published on Saturday on the editorial page.

2 Freelance columns

In addition, we publish regular columns by people who are not *Gazette* staffers. Toronto journalist Geoffrey Stevens writes a Sunday column and Montreal freelancer Jean-Claude Leclerc writes for Monday. Columns by freelance commentator Gretta Chambers, chancellor of McGill University, appear on Thursday. Long-time journalist John Yorston, who works for the CBC, does a review of the French press for the Friday paper.

Some other freelance columnists appear occasionally on this page; they include Gwynne Dyer and Mikhail Gorbachev.

3 Dialogue

Dialogue is the name we use for contributions by non-journalists, usually Montrealers, that are too long to be used as letters to the editor but that we think merit publication. Anyone may submit a piece for the Dialogue column — you don't have to wait to be asked — but it should be on a topic you have some qualification to write about. It's also best if submissions to the Dialogue column are on timely matters rather than something of a historical nature.

Keep the length to about 800 words, make sure your article is typed, and send it to Doug Sweet at *The Gazette*, 250 St. Antoine St. W., Montreal, H2Y 3R7. The fax number is 987-2399. Bear in mind, though, that as with letters to the editor, we get more submissions for the Dialogue slot than we are able to use.

4 Feature articles

We also publish analyses and commentaries from the many wire services to which *The Gazette* subscribes.

These include the Southam News Service as well as the news services of the New York Times, Washington Post, Los Angeles Times, Knight-Ridder Newspapers, The New Republic magazine, The Guardian and The Observer.

These articles run the gamut from political analysis to bright, colorful commentaries or columns about life in general.

This space is used to try to provide more information about issues and events than is possible in the regular news columns.

In addition, we publish articles by freelance journalists who submit articles on a wide variety of topics.

The 1993 Literacy Across the Curriculum writing contest for CEGEP and Secondary 5 students

FIRST PRIZE: $750
SECOND PRIZE: $300
THIRD PRIZE: $200

The first prize article will be published in *The Gazette*.

The task is to write an article of 700 -1000 words, addressed to the general readers of a daily newspaper, on one of the following contemporary issues:

1. **Ethical issues in journalism**
2. **How can society better meet the needs of families in the 1990s?**
3. **Immigration and refugee policy in Canada**
4. **Environmental concerns vs economic development**

Narrow the topic to deal with a specific aspect of the issue, take a position on the issue and convince your audience.

THE AUDIENCE: Readers of a daily English newspaper.

Deadline for submission: Friday, November 19, 1993

Details are available at Student Affairs and English Department offices at colleges, or in the general office of high schools, or call (514) 931-8731, local 1415.

Centre for Literacy 93-94 workshops & seminars

Local contexts: Multiple dimensions of literacy in the workplace

Leader: Sheryl Gowen, Georgia State University
Date: Thursday, October 28, 1993
Time: 5:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Rethinking workplace literacy: Building programs that make sense in a changing workplace

Leader: Sondra Stein, National Institute for Literacy
Date: March 24, 1994
Time: 5:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Thinking critically about language, race & gender

(in collaboration with The Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women (CCLOW))

Leaders: Olivia Rovinescu, Concordia University
Clifton Ruggles, Concordia University, PSBGM
Date: Saturday, January 29, 1994
Time: 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Virtual realities: From the concrete to the barely imaginable

Leader: Stephen Marcus, University of California,Santa Barbara
Date: Thursday, April 21, 1994
Time: 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Numeracy: The relationship between mathematics and language

Leader: Brian Smith, Dawson College
Date: Thursday, February 8, 1994
Time: 5:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Designing brief writing/thinking assignments across the disciplines

Leader: John Bean, Seattle University
Date: Friday, May 27, 1994
Time: 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

For details and registration forms, call (514)931-8731, local 1415, or fax (514)931-5181.

Reading Recovery comes to Quebec

Thursday, January 20, 1994

An information session for teachers and school administrators to learn about the approach developed by New Zealand educator, Marie Clay, for teaching reading to students who have not learned through more traditional classroom approaches. Find out about the Canadian institute that has undertaken to train teachers from across the country. Find out how 120 schools in Scarborough Ontario have put one trained specialist in each school. What has this meant for the learners? For the special services that have always been called upon to work with these students? What resources are available to pay for teacher training? Details to be announced. Call 931-8731, local 1415.

Co-sponsored by The Centre for Literacy, Literacy Partners of Quebec (LPQ), and Association of Teachers of English of Quebec (ATEQ).

Academic Alliance fall 1993

The Centre, in partnership with the Association of Teachers of English of Quebec is continuing their sponsorship of Academic Alliance evening discussions. These sessions always focus on topics of current interest to educators and are open to the general public free of charge. They take place at Dawson College from 7:30 - 9:30 p.m. The sessions planned for Fall 1993 are:

Perspectives on Portfolios Alternative assessment

Wednesday, October 13, 1993

A discussion with teachers of English, math, social sciences, and literacy

Media and new technologies: Why should teachers care?

Tuesday, November 13, 1993

Animator: Hal Thwaites, Concordia University

Are you on the Academic Alliance mail list?

Call 931-8731, local 1415 to receive information on upcoming sessions.

Computer software for adult literacy instructors and adult students

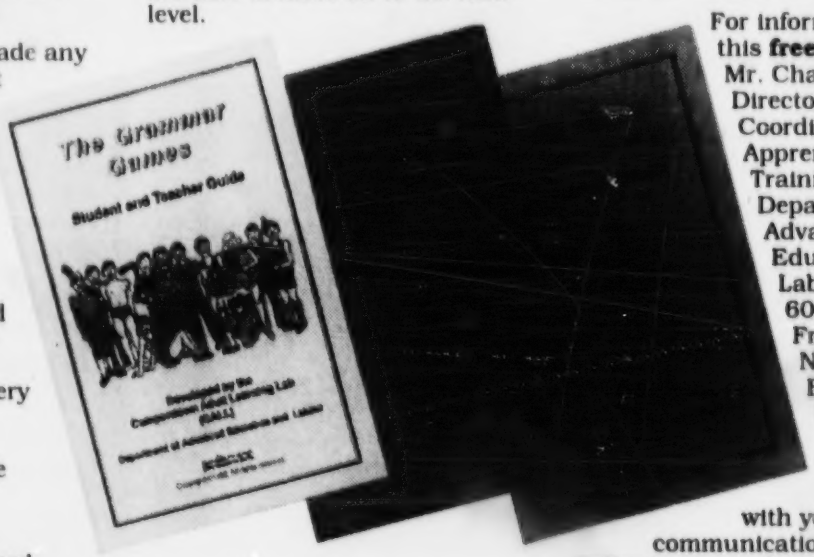
reviewed by Isa Helfield

The Camperdown Adult Learning Lab(CALL) Software is special because it has been specifically designed to meet the needs of adult literacy students.

The authors have not made any false assumptions about the students' background knowledge. Each concept is presented as if for the first time, and reinforced by stimulating activities and games that make learning pleasurable and interactive. Sound and graphics enhance the software making them very appealing. Readability levels based upon the Gunning Fog method are indicated.

The objectives of each program are clearly defined. Some are based on the Basic and Intermediate Academic Upgrading Competency Checklists. For example, the purpose of **Take a Break!** is to help adult students learn the ten basic rules of syllabication. Other objectives are derived from life skills. **Health Quest,** in the form of an interactive "Dungeons and Dragons" game, is designed to help students develop the basic concepts of nutrition.

Students are in control of their learning. The programs are easy to use with clear instructions given both on screen and in the student and teacher guides accompanying each program. To move from one screen to the next, students merely click on an icon with a mouse. They can spend as much time as they need studying one particular concept and can review previously learned material whenever they deem it necessary. Since the programs provide immediate feedback, they can easily track progress and more readily judge at what point they are able to move on to the next level.



While most of the software is student-oriented, some is designed specifically for the literacy instructor. **Cloze Encounters of the CALL Kind** allows teachers to create cloze exercises quickly and easily. **Worksheet Wizard** enables teachers to create worksheets and tests.

Funded by both the federal Department of Multiculturalism and Citizenship and the New Brunswick Department of Advanced Education and Labour, this unique project has developed over twenty-five interactive, motivational software packages for use on Macintosh computers. CALL software is available free of charge.

Congratulations are in order to Ellen Tremblay, Program Coordinator of the CALL project, and authors Margaret Pitre and Doug McLean. They have made a notable contributions to the fields of academic upgrading and computer-assisted instruction.

For information on this **freeware,** contact Mr. Charles Ramsey, Director, Program Coordination and Apprenticeship Training Branch, Department of Advanced Education and Labour, P.O. Box 6000, Fredericton, New Brunswick. E3B 5H1. Please enclose blank disks with your communication.

Following is a selected list of available programs and brief description.

N.B. "Student" always refers to adult.

continued on page 12

BOX

System requirements for CALL software:

- a Macintosh computer (SE or greater) with 1 megabyte or more of memory and a hard disk.
- Hypercard version 2.0 or greater on your hard disk.
- System file 6.05 or greater on your hard disk.

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Samples of CALL software

continued from page 11

The ABCs of Alphabetic Order helps students learn how to alphabetize words and use guide words in dictionaries and phone books.

Addition Drill helps students master the mysteries of addition.

Budgeting Your Bucks provides basic information on managing money.

Capital Idea helps students learn the correct use of capital letters.

Cloze Encounters of the CALL Kind helps instructors create customized cloze exercises.

Division Dozer helps students learn how to solve long division problems.

The Ghostly Guide to Good Grooming provides basic information on good grooming and personal hygiene.

The Grammar Games helps students learn about sentence subjects and predicates.

Health Quest : An Adventure in Nutrition provides understandable nutritional information.

The Magic of Metric helps adult students master the metric system.

Mighty Map helps students learn basic map skills.

The Percent Event helps students learn how to work with percents.

Take a Break! The Ten Rules of Syllabication helps students learn the basic rules of syllabication.

Yearbook offers adult learners the opportunity to develop skills in writing, following directions, and organizing information.

__Isa Helfield__ has been the animator of a Montreal computer centre for adult literacy students. She is currently coordinator of Literacy Partners of Quebec.

Playing To Win Network – community access to technology

Overview

The Playing To Win Network based in New York City is a membership organization for community computer centers. Network members, called Affiliates, represent a variety of different types of organizations, from after school programs to adult literacy programs to children's museums. What they all have in common is a commitment to increasing opportunities for underserved people to gain understanding and skill in the use of computers and related technology for the achievement of their own life and learning goals.

The goals:

- *To share Playing To Win's approach to teaching and using technology as a tool.*
- *To provide support services and resources to Affiliates.*
- *To foster a national community of those doing this work.*

Mission statement

Playing To Win was established in 1980 to confront the prospect that, in an increasingly technologically dominated society, people who are socially and/or economically disadvantaged will become further disadvantaged if they lack access to computers and computer-related technologies.

Playing To Win promotes and provides opportunities whereby people of all ages who typically lack access to computers and related technologies can learn to use these technologies in an environment that encourages exploration and discovery and, through this experience, develop personal skills and self-confidence.

Playing To Win will operate one or more community-based technology learning centers as arenas for creating, testing, and evaluating effective models of education in and with technology, and it will initiate efforts to share the results of its practical experience with others seeking to provide similar opportunities to their communities.

Playing To Win will be a leading advocate of equitable access to computers and related technologies. It will invite and actively encourage other organizations throughout the United States to join in this mission and will attempt, with them, to build a national network of neighborhood technology learning centers so as to promote the development of a technologically literate society.

Adopted October 6, 1988
For information:
Ramon Morales 1330 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10026
212-369-4077

The resources in The Centre for Literacy are catalogued and may be borrowed in person or by mail (postage covered by the borrower). Documents can be consulted in The Centre from Monday – Friday, 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

In addition to the materials listed in the catalogue, we have directories of programs and services, bibliographies on many subjects, international periodicals and newsletters, catalogues of learning materials, tapes/videos, and boxes of newspaper/magazine clippings.

We are also connected to the National Adult Literacy Database.

Printouts on specific subject headings can be requested at cost. For information, please call Catherine Duncan at (514) 931-8731, local 1415.

Selected resources: Portfolios

A Handbook for Using the Portfolio as a Tool for Assessing Written Language Development of Students of Age 4-8. Vista Unified School District.

A Handbook for Using the Portfolio as a Tool for Assessing Written Language Development of Students of Grades 3-8. Vista Unified School District.

Assessment Alternatives in Science. Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.

Assessment Alternatives in Social Studies. Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.

CAP Portfolio Report of Progress. Walnut Elementary School, Norwalk La Miranda Unified School District.

Evaluating Writing: Linking Large-Scale Testing and Classroom Assessment.

Finding the Value in Evaluation: Self-Assessment in a Middle School Classroom. Durham, NH. Educational Leadership.

Handbook of Writing Portfolio Assessment: A Program for College Placement. U.S.Department of Education.

"In Vermont Schools, Test on How Well Students Think Draws New Interest" *The New York Times*. New York, NY.

Math Assessment Alternatives. Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.

New Methods in College Writing Programs: 95-105. State University of New York, Stony Brook Portfolio-Based Evaluation Program.

Porfolios: process and product. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers.

Portfolio and the Evaluation of an Undergraduate Curriculum in General Education. Chicago, IL: Conference on College Composition and Communication.

Portfolio Assessment, 9th Grade. West Contra Unified School District.

Portfolio Assessment: An Exciting View of What Bilingual Children Can Do. Fresno Pacific College.

Portfolio Assessment: Sampling Student Work.

"Portfolio Assessment.," *The Reading Teacher* (December):264-265.

Portfolio Resources November 1992. Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.

Portfolios in the Writing Classroom. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Portfolios: Possibilities for Positive Assessment. Québec: Ministère de l'Éducation.

Profile of Littleton School District and Littleton High School. Littleton High School, N.H.

Reading Assessment Alternatives. Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.

The Best of the Miami University's Portfolios, 1992. Miami University.

The Portfolio Approach to Assessing Student Writing: An Interim Report.

Two Publications About the Portfolio System. New York: State University of New York, Stony Brook.

Using Portfolios of Student Work in Instruction and Assessment. National Council on Measurement in Education.

Using Portfolios to Assess Student Performance. Far West Laboratory.

Walnut School Writing Portfolio. Writing as a Process. Norwalk La Miranda Unified School District.

Montreal Conferences

Active Living Alliance Annual Symposium
"Living with Difference"
How persons with disabilities can live more active lives
September 30 - October 2, 1993
Information: Mrs. Josée Malo, (514) 933-2739

58th Annual Convention The Association for Business Communication
"Communication and the New Global Order"
October 27 - 30, 1993
Information: Dr. Joel Bowman, Tel: (616)387-5410; Fax: (616) 345-2740

National Conference Movement for Canadian Literacy (MCL)
co-hosted by Literacy Partners of Quebec (LPQ)
November 4 -7, 1993
Montreal, Quebec Information: (514)931-8731, local 1415

PAPT-PACT
Annual Conference
November 25 -26,1993

Springboards 1994
English Language Arts Conference
April 1994

Chronological Conference Listing

Composition in the 21st Century
"Crisis and Change"
October 8 -10, 1993
Miami University
Oxford OH

Second National Writing Conference
"Building Bridges"
October 20 -23, 1993
Winnipeg, MN

1993 Fall Forum Coalition of Essential Schools
November 4 -6, 1993
Louisville KY

The First Annual Conference on Redefining Basic Skills in Higher Education
"Exploring New Approaches and Transforming our Pedagogies"
November 5 - 7, 1993
New York
Information: Dr. Max Kirsch, (212) 541-0324

International Experiential Learning Conference
A Global Conversation about Learning
November 9 -12, 1993
Washington, D.C.
Information: International Experiential Learning Conference, 223 West Jackson, #510, Chicago, IL 60606

Annual Meeting Society for Literature and Science
November 18 -21, 1993
MIT
Boston & Cambridge MA

National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)
November 19 - 22, 1993
Pittsburgh, PA

1993 Annual Adult Education Conference
November 18 -20, 1993
Dallas TX

1993 Modern Language Association
December 26 -30, 1993
Toronto, ON

College Composition and Communication (CCCC) Winter Workshop
January 6 -8, 1994
Clearwater Beach, FL

1994 Annual Conference on Lifelong Learning
"Re-educating America: Technology and Higher Education"
February 16 -18, 1994
San Diego, CA
Information: Jim Boss (619)563-7144

1994 Conference on College Composition and Communication
March 16 -19, 1994
Nashville, TN

Canadian Council for Teachers of English and Language Arts (CCTELA)
"Literacy Through the Looking Glass"
May 4 - 7, 1994
Moncton, NB

Details on listings available from The Centre for Literacy, (514) 931-8731, local 1415.

1993/1994 Inuit Art School Calendar at discount price

- **Proceeds benefit non-profit educational organizations**
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To buy a calendar, contact Catherine Duncan at The Centre for Literacy, 3040 Sherbrooke St. W., Montreal, Quebec, Canada H3Z 1A4. (514) 931-8731 #1415.

Out-of-town residents interested in obtaining the calendar by mail should write to us. We'll find out the mailing costs to your destination and let you know how to proceed.

Call for manuscripts on "Literacy in the Information Age"

for a special issue of *Information and Behaviour*

The Information Age has brought an explosion of new sources, channels, and forms of information. However, our capacity to process and use this vast store of knowledge, news and entertainment continues to be very limited. The communication explosion is therefore giving us many more choices, but at the same time challenging us to develop new concepts and new "literacies" in order to respond to these opportunities. At the same time, we have not yet developed our concepts of literacy with regard to older means of communication, whether they be television, film, radio, newspapers, or magazines.

The School of Communication, Information and Library Studies has just celebrated its 10th anniversary with a symposium series on the topic of Literacy in the Information Age." A special issue of *Information and Behaviour* will include chapters from Rutgers faculty and guest speakers who presented in the series as well as a group os selected educators and scholars.

The editors invite submissions on any aspect of literacy, broadly conceived.
Information: Professor Robert Kubey, Department of Communications, Rutgers University, New Brunswick NJ 08903, Tel: (908)932-7915; Fax: (908) 932-6916.

Call for proposals

Conference for Teachers of English and Language Arts (CCTELA)
Moncton, NB,
May 4 – 7, 1994
Literacy Through the Looking Glass
Forms available from:
Pam Sheridan Weldon,
574 Salisbury Road,
Moncton, NB,
E1E !B8;
Tel: (506) 855-1017.

Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women (Quebec) CCLOW & The Centre for Literacy
present
A screening and discussion

Inequity in the classroom a video and manual

This outstanding resource for teachers and adult educators, developed by a group of feminist educators at Concordia University, uncovers the many facets of racism and sexism that permeate traditional classrooms. Divided into four parts—workshop, fact sheets, annotated bibliography and selected bibliography — the manual is intended to help sensitize teachers and adult educators on discrimination in the classroom and illustrate ways of countering it. The video prepares viewers to use the manual.

Date: October 4th 1993
Time: 7:30 - 9:30 p.m.
Place: Dawson College, 4001 De Maisonneuve W. (or through Atwater metro)
Animator: Michelle Séguin, member of the development team

Following a viewing of the video, Michelle will take participants through the manual and answer questions.
To reserve a place, call (514)931-8731, local 1415 by day, October 1st.

Coffee will be served.

New Publications

A Chance to Talk: The Birth of the Feminist Literacy Workers' Network, a report on the 1992 founding conference of the Feminist Literacy Workers' Network, is available for $1.50 per copy.
To order, make cheque payable to the Ad Hoc Steering Committee of FLWN.
Send to: Feminist Literacy Workers' Network, c/o CCLOW, 47 Main Street, Toronto, ON, M4E 2V6. Tel: (416) 699-1909; Fax:(416) 699-2145.

National Adult Literacy Database(NALD)

NALD is a database and bulletin board service to literacy practitioners and researchers across Canada. With listings of more than 5000 literacy programs/projects and services, NALD can provide directories and contact names to anyone setting up new programs or inves 'gating practices. It can also set up electronic conferencing on request. For information on how you or your organization can benefit from NALD: Tamara Ilersich, NALD, c/o Fanshawe College, London Ontario, Tel. (519) 452-4446; fax (519) 451-8831.

Matsushita provides gift of TV/VCR

The Centre for Literacy would like to thank Matsushita Electronics of Canada (MELCA) for their gift of a TV/VCR. This donation was part of a larger contribution of equipment to literacy organizations across Canada,. arranged through ABC CANADA. At The Centre, the equipment is used in all the teacher and tutor training and workshops, saving many dollars per year in rental fees.

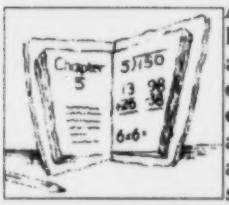
continued on page 16

continued from page15

The Quebec Federation of Home and Schools Fall Conference Open to all

Theme:Family Matters — Our Children, Whose Responsibility?
Date: October 23, 1993
Place: John Rennie High School, Pointe Claire, QC
Information: (514) 481-5619

LEARN from the Yellow pages



ABC CANADA has accomplished a dream of adult educators — access to advertising space for literacy and ABE classes across Canada. The private sector literacy foundation, through an agreement with Télé-direct, has negotiated a free page of advertising in the yellow pages of all telephone books in the country. Under the heading LEARN, students can find local number(s) for information on classes, tutoring, and other literacy/ABE support services available in that region. Check the yellow pages nearest you for the listing.

DRAWING: A link to Literacy

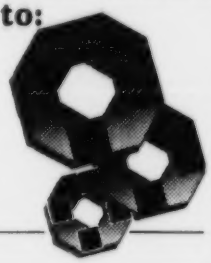
Stunning drawings and moving texts on social and personal issues that touch us all – war, race, love , AIDS, pollution – produced by college students. Calls into question popular misconceptions about how and why ordinary people write and draw.

Of special interest to teachers and tutors, counsellors, social workers, therapists – ideas for classroom practice – useful as catalysts for discussion and response, **but also** a gift for anyone who shares human concerns.

To order a copy send a cheque for $10.00 plus $3.00 shipping & handling plus applicable sales tax(es) in Canada. Make cheque payable to: The Centre for Literacy. Mail to: 3040 Sherbrooke Street West, Montreal, Quebec, H3Z 1A4.

To subscribe, complete this form and mail it with your cheque to:

The Centre for Literacy, 3040 Sherbrooke Street West, Montreal, Quebec, Canada H3Z 1A4



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Literacy Across the Curriculum

is published four times during the academic year by The Centre for Literacy

VOL 3 No. 2 SUMMER 1993

Media FOCUS

THE CENTRE FOR LITERACY

A special issue dedicated to Quebec's first conference on media literacy

a bilingual meeting ground

A conference on media education attended by parents, teachers, researchers and educators was held at Dawson College in Montreal on June 14-16, 1993. It was jointly sponsored by The Centre for Literacy and le Service aux collectivités de l'Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM) in collaboration with l'Association nationale des téléspectateurs-trices, and le Département des sciences de l'éducation et la Famille de l'éducation de UQAM. This issue of Media Focus presents highlights and selected reports from the conference. An outline of the full program appears in the centrefold and a background article can be found on pp 11-12. The organizers are seeking funds to publish full proceedings.

What is media literacy and why should I care if I'm not a teacher? Notes from a public debate

Laurier Lapierre rejects the notion that media literacy is the solution to society's ills and cautions against intellectualizing the act of watching tv. He refers to it as "...pure, pure, pure fun."

The President of the National Action Committee of Radio and Television Broadcasters For a Less Violent Society provoked a lively reaction from an audience of more than 100 people as the opening speaker at the public session on the first evening.

Laurier Lapierre

Lapierre acknowledged parents' anxiety about the problem of violence in the media. But, citing tv as our central instrument of communication, he praised the majority of the programming, claiming that there is, in fact, very little violence. Despite this claim, he did not deny the link between societal violence and tv violence; however, he warned the audience they were about to fall into a "terrible pit" if they believed that media literacy would curtail and eradicate violence on tv and in society. Violence, Lapierre insisted passionately, exists first in the hearts and minds of the people who watch and permit their children to watch the violence available to them.

John Pungente, S.J. disagreed with Lapierre's assertion that the classroom is *not* the place for media literacy. He drew on his own teaching experience which indicates not only that students do not fall asleep during media courses, rather they "come brilliantly to life." The director of The Jesuit Communication Project in Toronto used a

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Media Focus

is a supplement to **Literacy Across the Curriculum** published four times a year by **The Centre for Literacy, Inc.**
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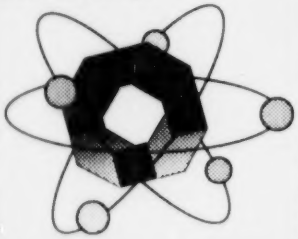
The Centre for Literacy/Le Centre d'Alphabétisation is a resource centre and teacher-training project designed to provide training, research, and information services which promote and link the advancement of literacy in the schools, the workplace and the community. The Centre gratefully acknowledges the support of the National Literacy Secretariat, Human Resources and Labour Canada and Dawson College.



Literacy for the 21st century
Literacy encompasses a complex set of abilities to understand and use the dominant symbol systems of a culture for personal and community development. In a thechnological society, the concept of literacy is expanding to include the media and electronic text, in addition to alphabetic and number systems. These abilities vary in different social and cultural contexts according to need and demand. Individuals must be given life-long earning opportunities to move along a continuum that includes the reading and writing, critical understanding, and decision-making abilities they need in their community.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

video clip from an American news report to illustrate what transpires in a classroom where media literacy is being addressed.

Pungente said we must study the media because they dominate our cultural and political lives and often give us the only information we have about certain events. Making a strong link between values and violence in the media, Pungente declared that it is the *lack* of values which results in violence. He made a distinction between our vision of the things we value—home, family, friendship—and the reality of the 1990s which tends to ignore these traditional values previously passed down by family, school and church. The media now function in that capacity as they help define today's heroes and role models.

Pungente, like Lapierre, holds viewers responsible for ensuring that the media reflect the "right kinds of values". He defined a media literate society as one which has the critical skills to *demand* a better quality of shows and concluded by stating that to be media literate is now not a choice; it is a necessity.

With a more local perspective, **Lorraine Pagé,** President of the Centrale de L'enseignment du Québec (CEQ), spoke of media education and the role of the school, noting

Lorraine Pagé

that as the media become increasingly diverse, young people devote more of their time to media than to school. Some teachers complain that communication skills have deteriorated, that their students lack the ability to think in a linear manner as a result of their exposure to the media and its distortion of time and space. This, she pointed out, begs the question of whether students are being given the tools to

BOX

Observations about media literacy — Laurier Lapierre:

- Begin by educating about *violence*. The industry will continue to make violent programs as long as the audience continues to be titillated by it: we cannot expect a "better morality" of the industry than of the audience.
- School is the least appropriate place to promote media literacy given teachers' time constraints, lack of liberty and the fact that they are "profoundly ignorant of tv themselves." Courses in media education are doomed to failure because students will be bored by a pedagogical approach to the medium.
- It is society which is violent and its impact on children is immeasurable. All members of society must create harmony in order for the violence to diminish.

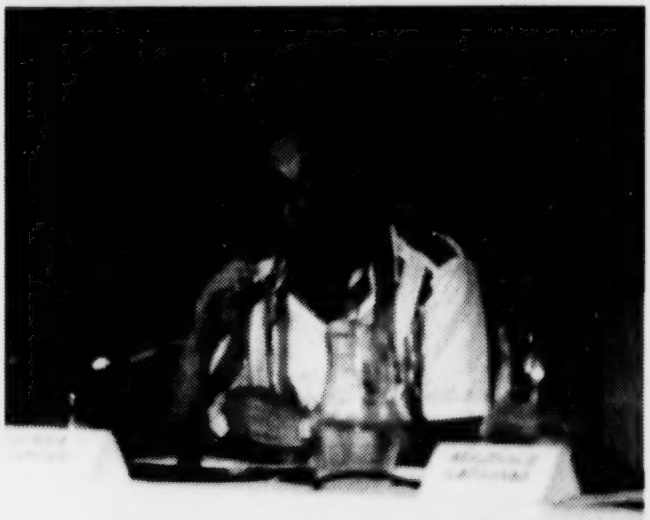
cope with and understand the glut of information and images they absorb daily.

Pagé worries that students and teachers now find themselves together in the classroom unequipped to make the link between learning in the traditional manner and the learning opportunities provided by the media. She suggests that the rising drop-out rate may be related to the school's inability to integrate popular culture and current communication technologies into their programs.

Members of audience question opening night panelists.

Because new ways of communicating bring about new languages and new ways of thinking, they have impact on every aspect of our daily lives, including the classroom. But educators are slow to get caught up in the media education movement so most initiatives are being carried on outside of the academic setting. However, she cautions against unorthodox corporate endeavours like Youth News Network.

Pagé referred to a certain defensiveness and resistance amongst educators who favour traditional methods of education over use of the media. Unfortunately, this attitude overlooks the influence of the cultural environment and numerous new literacies. Pagé emphasized the urgent need to ensure that our schools are prepared and equipped to meet the challenges of today's society.



BOX

Suggestions for encouraging media literacy - Lorraine Pagé:

- That the Ministry of Education of Quebec establish a working committee to identify the objectives of media education courses and propose methods of introducing these courses to students at all levels, including teacher-training programs.
- That the Ministry support the establishment of a multi-media resource centre to include the mass media as well as computers.
- That all efforts to develop media education programs be supported by the Ministry of Communications, Ministry of Cultural Affairs and le Secrétariat de la famille.

BOX

Media literacy (as defined in the Ontario curriculum) provides an informed and critical unde: ;tanding of:

- The nature of the mass media
- The techniques used by the mass media
- The impact upon the person watching the mass media and the ability to produce media products

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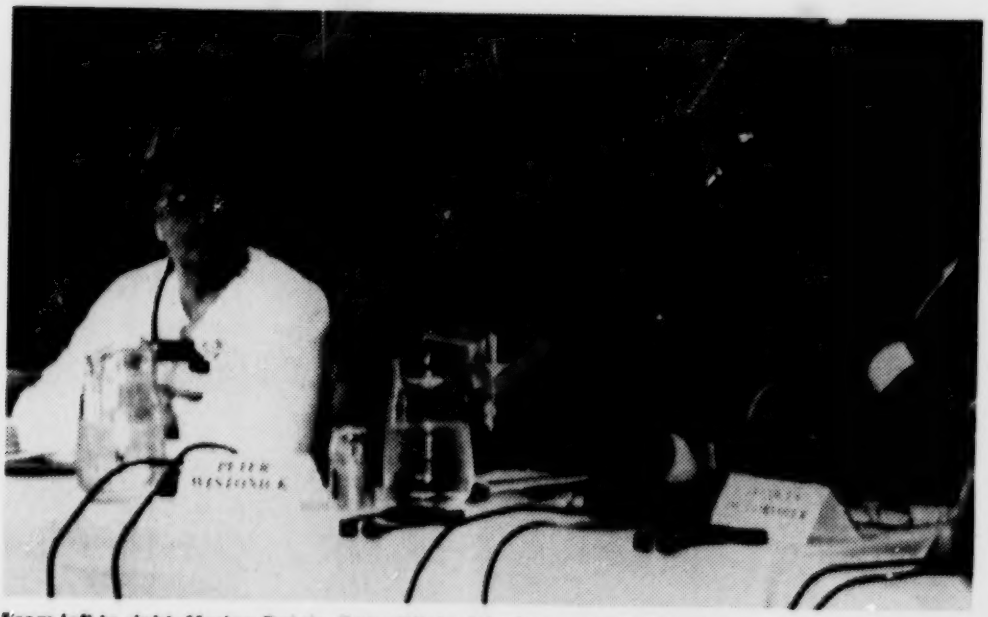
A plenary: How can we identify our needs concerning media literacy? Who needs to become media literate?



From left to right: Marion Daigle, Peter Wintonick, Jacques De Lorimier.

[The first day of the conference was made up of plenary sessions. The diversity of backgrounds, issues, presentations and points of view offered a rich variety of experiences and opportunities for interaction. Participants rose to the occasion, as evidenced by the stimulating discussion which followed each of the plenaries. ed.]

Peter Wintonick, Co-director of *Manufacturing Consent: Noam Chomsky and the Media*, began his presentation with a brief clip from the film, followed by comments about how the media and progressive politics could be integrated.

Through a personal narrative, Wintonick traced his affinity for the media and his professional experiences on the way to becoming an independent filmmaker. As such, he defines his role as an "essayist in the tradition of the great and not-so-great writers."

Inspired by Chomsky, Wintonick's main preoccupation for the past 10 years has been with his own profession — the media. His travels around the world and popular response to the film confirm what he called "a need and hunger for actual materials which address these issues of media." This is especially so of media literate audiences who crave the kind of information they do not get on tv or through the other mass media. Wintonick stressed the need to generate alternative material on subjects of social relevance. While decrying the lack of widespread financial support for such initiatives, he concluded with the hope that new awareness of the need for media literacy will change this situation.

Lina Trudel, author of *La population face aux medias* and Director of Communications of l'Institut canadien d'education des adultes (ICEA), defines the goal of media education as helping people to understand and interact with the media, not simply to see them as technological advances. Media education is a necessity, she affirms; however, because our needs are so diverse and must be considered from many points of view, the subject is very complex.

Amongst Quebec educators, there has not been a great cry for media education, perhaps because the media are largely considered as leisure activities. Trudel suggested that another reason for this apathy may be that people, tired of hearing that they are incompetent parents, friends or citizens, prefer not to hear of their incompetence in yet another area of their lives.

Trudel stressed the importance of the research done by academics, but stated that education and theory alone will not solve all the problems inherent to the media. Media education, she

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

BOX

Key aims of media education — Lina Trudel

- To develop critical skills to interact more competently with the media.
- To help people improve their communication skills.
- To make people aware of their rights with regard to the media and of the power they have to influence them.

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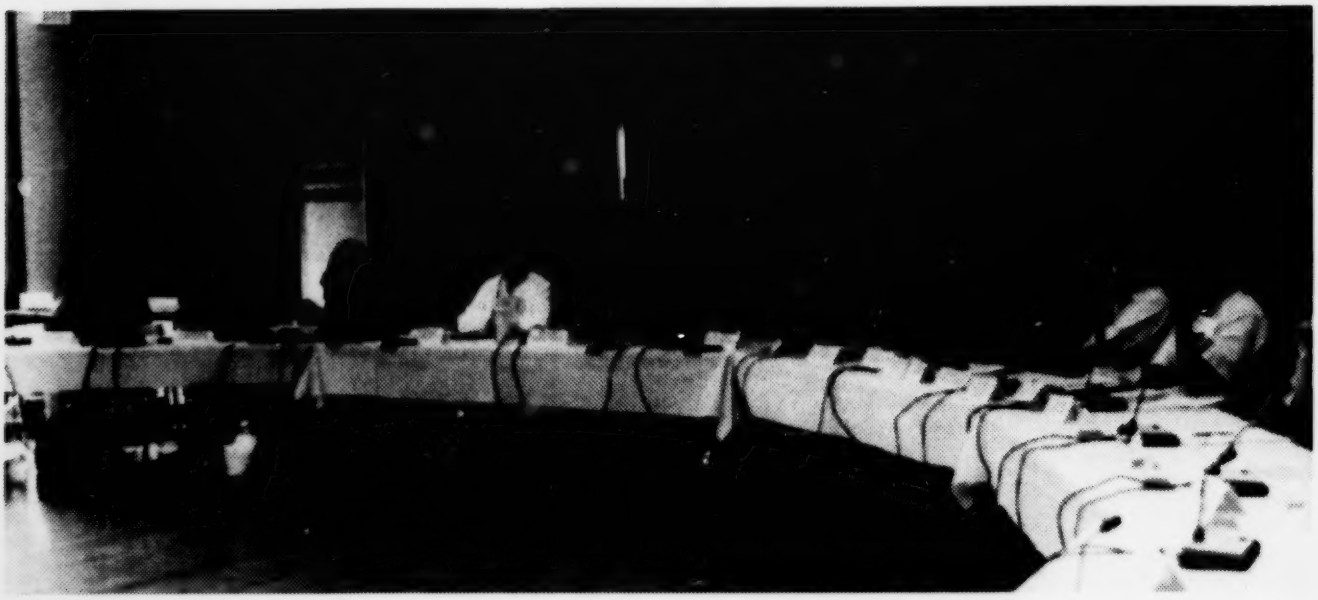

suggested, must take on a much wider perspective and be integrated into our educational, social and cultural lives.

Since schools are not educating students to understand the societies in which they live, she questioned how these same schools could succeed in educating about the media. She underlined the need for courses which would teach people how to function better in their communities by understanding that they must assume certain responsibilities as citizens, especially to know and exercise their rights. She stressed the importance of this training as a means of empowerment. Awareness of these rights, she concluded, will also improve the quality of the media.

Marion Daigle, Quebec Literacy Director of The Quebec Federation of Home and School, identified our general inability to come to terms with the realities of the Information Age as an area of concern. She compared the impact of current and future technologies to that of the revolution of the printing press; that in response, the term "literacy" is evolving beyond reading and writing to include an understanding of science and technology as well as knowledge of the electronic media and its power in our daily lives.

According to Daigle these changing technologies are placing severe strains upon society and its institutions. Daigle believes that a discussion of media literacy would be incomplete without some attention to how the media affect families socially, economically, educationally and culturally. These influences are fundamentally changing social patterns within the family. She stressed the importance of making connections between these areas and the media and the need to acquire new skills to understand current and future techniques and technologies of our age.

Jacques De Lorimier, of the Superior Council of Education and author of *Ils jouent au Nintendo*, focused on video games as he made some observations on media education. Speaking of the importance of the media and new technologies which have put schools at the crossroads of the technological revolution, he questioned whether schools are meeting the needs of today's students who are profoundly affected by the omnipresence of the media.

He also expressed some concern that schools are totally out of touch with the impact of video games and computers on young people who remain quite blasé as they interact with and move from one medium to another. They are totally at ease with sound and the moving image. Schools, he fears, are still bound by the fifteenth-century notion of traditional print as the means of learning.

BOX

Challenges which confront media literacy — Jacques De Lorimier

- How to close the cultural gap between adults and children.
- How to overcome the opposition which exists between education *of* the media and education *through* the media.
- How to integrate media education in many areas of the curriculum rather than making it a specialized area of learning.

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PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Awareness and Knowledge: Tools for Living with the Media

Rationale

Here, as in other parts of the world, awareness of the importance of media literacy evolved from independant groups within the educational community. In order for the movement to grow, future initiatives must include parents, the community and media professionals, bringing us closer to promoting media literacy in every aspect of our lives. This conference was an important step in opening dialogue between Quebec's francophone and anglophone educators, community workers, parents, researchers and media professionals.

Format

The conference opened with a public evening session followed over the next two days by a series of invitational panel presentations and discussions on critical themes in media literacy. The invitational sessions were limited to 80 participants.

Objectives:

- To identify work being done in the field of media literacy in Canada and other countries.
- To provide the first opportunity ever for parents, teachers, researchers and media professionals in Quebec to participate in open dialogue about media education at a bilingual conference.
- To encourage parents, educators, media professionals and people who work in community organizations to identify future initiatives for media education in their milieus.

Program

Public session
Monday, June 14, 1993
7:30 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.

What is media literacy? And why should I care if I'm not a teacher? An urgent issue!

Chair: Réginald Grégoire, author, *Grandir avec la télévision* Superior Council of Education, 1982.

Speakers:

- Laurier L. Lapierre, President, The Broadcasting Industry's National Action Group for a Less Violent Society
- John J. Pungente, S.J., Director, The Jesuit Communication Project, Toronto
- Lorraine Pagé, President, Centrale de l'enseignement du Québec

Invitational conference
Tuesday & Wednesday, June 15 - 16, 1993
Animator: Laurent Laplante, Journalist

Day 1: Tuesday, June 15, 1993

***Plenary: 9:00 a.m.-12 p.m.**

How can we identify our media literacy needs? What needs will be met with media literacy?

Speakers:

- Peter Wintonick, co-director, *Manufacturing Consent: Noam Chomsky and the Media,* NFB/Necessary Illusions, 1992.
- Lina Trudel, Institut canadien d'éducation des adultes and author, *La population face aux médias,* VLB, 1993,
- Marion Daigle, The Quebec Federation of Home and School
- Jacques DeLorimier, Superior Council of Education, author, *Ils jouent au Nintendo*
- Simultaneous interpretation

A conference for educators, parents and community workers, researchers and media professionals

Lunch 12:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.
Luncheon speaker, Pierre-Henri Zoller
Professor at the University of Geneva and representative of the organizing committee of the International Conference on Media Education and School Curricula (Institut International de la Communication Visuelle, Chaumont-Neuchâtel, April, 1993).

***Plenary: 2:00 p.m.- 5:00 p.m.**
Media literacy defined - is it possible?
What are the key questions?

Speakers:
- Barry Duncan, President, Association for Media Literacy, Ontario
- Réginald Grégoire, author, *Grandir avec la télévision*
- Louise Spikler, Communications Consultant
- John J. Pungente, S.J. The Jesuit Communication Project

*Simultaneous interpretation

Day 2: Wednesday, June 16, 1993

Simultaneous panels and focus groups
9:00 a.m. - 12:15 p.m.

School
Moderator: Pierre C. Bélanger, Department of Communications, University of Ottawa

The role of media literacy in teacher-training and school curricula: To integrate across the curriculum or to create a new discipline?

Speakers:
- Jacques Piette, Department of Arts and Communication, Université de Sherbrooke
- Stéphanie Dansereau, Department of Education, Université du Québec à Montréal
- Normand Pinet, chargé de recherche, Direction de ressources technologiques de formation, Ministry of Education of Quebec
- Winston Emery, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, Faculty of Education, McGill University

Family
Moderator: Pascal Boutroy, International Centre of Films for Children and Young People (CIFEJ)
What steps must be taken to develop media literacy in the family?
How can we reach parents and families?

Speakers:
- Micheline Frenette, Professor, Department of Communications; researcher, Centre for Youth and Media, Université de Montréal
- Alan Mirabelli, Vanier Institute of the Family
- Gaston Gauthier, President, Carrefour québecois de la famille; Project Director, *Familles et télévision*, Conseil de la Famille du Québec
- Francesca Arpin, Vice-President, English Services, Fédération de comités de parents de la province du Québec (FCPPQ)

Lunch: 12:15 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Focus Groups - 2:00 p.m. - 3:15 p.m.

***Plenary - 3:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.**
Animator: Laurent Laplante, Journalist

- ***A synthesis of themes arising out of focus groups***
- ***Wrap-up***
- ***Closing remarks***

* Simultaneous interpretation

Reception: 5:00 p.m.- 6:00 p.m.

This conference was made possible with support from:

- The Centre for Literacy of Quebec
- Ministry of Communications of Quebec
- Ministry of Education of Quebec
- Secrétariat à la famille du Québec
- Services aux collectivités, Université du Québec à Montréal
- The Montreal Catholic School Commission, Community Education Services
- The Secretary of State of Canada
- *The Gazette*
- Dawson College

Where do we go from here?

The second day of the conference allowed for more in-depth discussion. Participants opted to attend one of two simultaneous panel discussions on specific issues related to media education, one on the school and one on the family. Following these presentations, participants met in small groups divided along linguistic lines to discuss questions which had emerged, to identify needs and to establish ways of initiating on-going action in each milieu. Focus groups reconvened after lunch to prepare reports which were presented during a closing plenary session.

The Panel on School dealt with the role of media literacy in teacher-training and school curricula and the question of whether to integrate across the curriculum or to create a new discipline.

The Panel on Family considered two questions: How can we develop media literacy in the family? How can we reach parents and families?

School workshop (anglophone): Selected observations & recommendations

On teacher training and course design

- Training is required for both teachers and students to be critical of all media, including print.
- Courses should integrate popular culture.
- Teachers have to move away from traditional linear lesson plans.

There was strong consensus that follow-up is critical and one means of such follow-up is an institute for teachers to be held during the summer of 1994.

Integration of media literacy courses should be across all levels, abilities, ages and disciplines

Barriers to media literacy

- copyright laws
- censorship
- lack of equipment
- trivialization of the subject

This workshop agreed that all groups working to promote media literacy should strengthen their resolve.

Family workshop (anglophone): Selected observations & recommendations

Discussion focused on two major aspects of the questions:

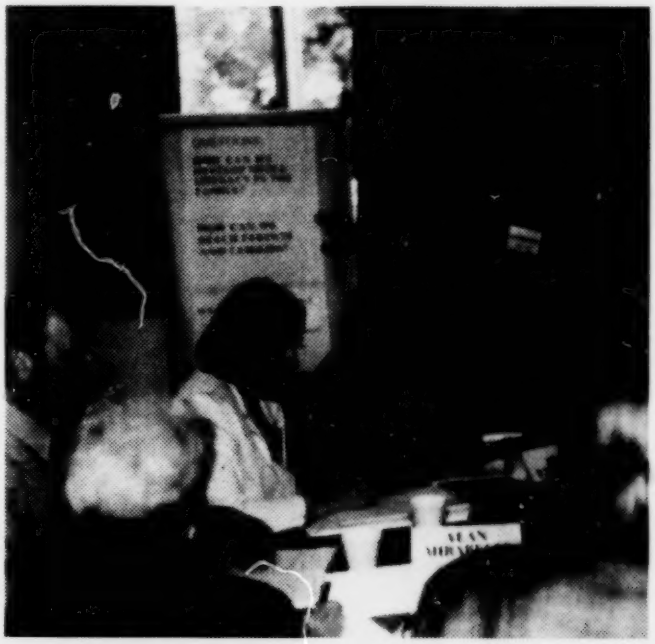
- Regulatory mechanisms for the media
- Building understanding, and promoting education

Community involvement in media literacy initiatives is required to:

- lobby at all levels among parents, teachers, community, and civic officials.
- serve the people who really need help.

A parents' wish list (selection)

- That tv and radio program directors paid more attention to what they present and to what they hear from the public.



- That parental opinions and values were affirmed by the media.
- That parents had access to tools to help make informed choices (i.e. more information in TV Guide).
- That a pool of parenting resources and information were made widely accessible (i.e. in schools, libraries, community groups, churches etc).
- That the CRTC included media literacy in its licence approval.
- That an electronic forum were developed for on-going communication and as mechanisms for networking and problem-solving forums for dialogue and exploration.
- That the Ministry of Education and industry took active roles in media literacy education (funding, information, resources, knowledge).
- That a sense of community were rebuilt.

Media literacy defined – Is it possible? What are the key questions? A plenary

Réginald Grégoire, author of *Grandir avec la télévision*, concentrated his remarks on tv, to reflect his own expertise. He dealt with three questions: the possibility of a definition of media education; what media education consists of; and the larger key issues concerning media education.

Barry Duncan, President of the Association for Media Literacy, used a clip from the Spielberg film *Jurassic Park* and an array of spin-off artifacts to illustrate the impact of the media and popular culture on society. One problem with much media literacy analysis, Duncan said, is that it does not look at the nature of the audience and what they bring to a text as they interact with it. Because we cannot assume that everybody reads everything in the same way, when we talk about media literacy we must expand our definition to include the entire cultural environment and its numerous readings.

In addressing the questions related to media literacy, he spoke of ownership of the media, referring to Youth News Network, denounced by many for bringing advertising into the classroom. There is a great deal of ambiguity concerning the backers of YNN, Duncan stated; when such an operation goes into the classroom, much of the agenda is set by the corporate owners. Initiatives like YNN also raise crucial issues about ownership, audience and text.

Louise Spikler, media consultant, concentrated on film, as she gave a resumé of a recent study conducted amongst 83 young people at the elementary and secondary school levels in Quebec.

The study considered various means for developing an awareness of film which included sensitizing students to the cinema, running workshops, producing media messages and holding discussions.

Results indicated that students at the secondary level who had had some film education did, in fact, show a greater interest in Quebec films and a tendency to see somewhat more complex films than those who had not had the courses.

The former group also had a greater awareness

BOX

For consideration in media literacy — Barry Duncan

- The right empowerment strategies for teachers and facilitators and the growing importance of work being done around critical pedagogy.
- The legacy of Marshall McLuhan and his research into the new technologies.
- The significance of the audience, how kids negotiate the meaning from media texts and the pleasures they get from them.

BOX

Objectives of a Quebec study on film awareness – Louise Spikler

- To analyze subjects' tastes in films, their consumer habits and their perceptions of Quebec films.
- To determine whether or not there are notable differences between students who have some experience with film courses and those who do not.
- To determine whether courses had improved students' understanding of film language and cinematography.
- To determine the needs of students in terms of film courses.

BOX

Some student comments about film education – Louise Spikler

- All were very enthusiastic about having courses in film education.
- Many expressed the wish that these courses were offered at school as options taught by a media professional and *not* by their teachers.

of cinematography and film language than those who had not had film studies. Generally, both groups fared the same in terms of understanding the roles of people involved in producing a film. In terms of critcal analysis, however, students who had had film study were more advanced and more articulate when discussing elements of films and their own reactions to them.

John Pungente, in his second presentation at the conference, declared that the question of whether or not media literacy is possible in Canada is rhetorical; nearly every province is teaching media literacy in one form or another, even though it is mandated only in Ontario.

John Pungente, S.J.

More important, he warned, the question is whether media literacy will grow here, since the "back-to-basics" movement refuses to consider this an important part of literacy in today's world. In looking at key questions, Pungente referred to violence in the media and showed a clip from a segment of YTV's news program which looked at effects of violence on the young. He also referred to other issues such as racism, sexism, stereotyping, advertising and values. Using clips from sitcoms he illustrated how they present a certain point of view and set of values about these issues which are readily accepted by many audiences without question.

Some parting comments

"J'ai le désir de poursuivre ma réflexion."

"This conference was most stimulating. Thank you for making it possible for me to attend. I am very grateful. The points raised were vital and invigorating. I gained immensely from the discussion."

"Belle expérience, initiative avec le milieu anglophone. Bravo! Merci!"

"Une évenement majeur que j'aurais aimé lire dans les journaux. Si on n'est pas dans les médias nous n'existons pas."

"A great initiative that ought to be pursued."

"Un seul mot: Bravo! aux organisateurs et tout le "personnel"...

"I was very pleased. Hope there will be future conferences. It was a great beginning. "

"Merci pour l'initiative et la bonne volonté de faire quelque chose pour aider les jeunes de demain. Bravo!"

"Congratulations! Let's carry on."

From left to right: Conference co-chair Michel Pichette, Dr. Patrick Woodsworth, Director-General of Dawson College and Judy Brandeis, Conference co-chair.

Media literacy: A critical issue

Michel Pichette

A concern for educators, parents, community workers and media professionals

Judy Brandeis

Literacy in the information age encompasses more than traditional print and text. There is a growing awareness that being literate now means being able to decode the media and critically understand their messages. The only way to achieve this literacy is to integrate media education into every aspect of the traditional classroom. But media education reaches beyond the classroom and requires the interest and attention of parents, educators, policymakers and media professionals. Both the anglophone and francophone communities in Quebec are now addressing the issue albeit in different ways.

Although the Superior Council of Education made several recommendations regarding this situation in 1989, it would appear that they have not yet been widely acted upon. With the exception of a few individual teacher initiatives, francophone schools in Quebec are not addressing education *about* the media. Since the 1970's, some parts of the Ministry of Education have been stressing audiovisual technology and computer education, an approach that has emphasized education *through* the media, i.e. using media as a tool.

Media literacy, on the other hand, emphasizes mastery of media language skills, an awareness of the social and cultural environments and an understanding of the characteristics of the media and the information society. In the anglophone sector the situation is somewhat more advanced as the Ministry of Education of Quebec's Media Committee is currently working on Media Files, a curriculum guide for use at the secondary level.

We must continue to work towards establishing strong links between traditional notions of education, and popular culture and the media. These new concepts call into question existing teacher-training programs which seem to be ignoring the reality of our social and cultural environments. The programs tend to be preparing tomorrow's teachers for yesterday's society, as little has changed to accommodate changing modes of thinking and communicating.

Community and social service groups which offer informal education could benefit from the inclusion of media education in the activities they provide their clientele. Although the Ministries of Health and Social Affairs, the Secrétariat à la famille and the Conseil de la famille appear to be gaining more awareness of how the media affect family life, they have had some difficulty defining their specific roles, and very little of their research is known within the anglophone sector. The Ministries of Culture and Communications are involved with legislation surrounding copyright, still a contentious issue amongst educators and media professionals.

As for parents, families and people in general, the situation is much the same. Because most people do not yet recognize or understand the importance of media literacy at home and in schools, this critical element of education will not be a priority on the agendas of policy makers, researchers or media professionals. And so the reality is that despite the gains we have made in media literacy in Quebec, we have a long way to go in establishing this new literacy as a critical factor in living with the media and our information society. This is the challenge facing Quebec as it becomes the first province to address the place of media education in the family and to recognize the influence of the entire cultural environment. In taking these first slow steps, we are moving towards a better understanding of the media's role in society.

Elsewhere in Canada, media education is gaining importance. Although Ontario is the only province in which it is mandated, The Saskatoon Board of Education is advanced in this area and has been providing activities to develop media literacy and production skills for a number of years. Several other provinces including Quebec, Nova Scotia, British Columbia and Manitoba, have established media education associations to promote interest in the topic.

In other parts of the world, media education has been recognized as an integral part of society as well as an important element of school curricula.

teacher-training programs, and community education. In 1989 a number of European ministers of education adopted several resolutions which are outlined in a document entitled, *La société l'information: un défi pour les politiques de l'éducation*. More recently, the *Déclaration du Séminaire international de Chaumont-Neuchâtel* was held in April 1993. Recommendations which came out of these events will continue to shape much of the thinking about media education, as will the experiences of France, Great Britain, the Scandinavian countries,The Phillipines, Chile and Brazil. Australia, long a leader in the field, continues to respond to the need for media education and the work of non-governmental groups in this field has, for a number of years, interested UNESCO. We cannot ignore the richness of all these experiences, for media literacy is a fundamental part of the literacy movement and implies a better understanding of the role of the media and popular culture in our society.

Here, as in other parts of the world, awareness of the importance of media literacy evolved from independent groups within the educational community. The hope is that these groups will continue to flourish and share their work so that future initiatives will include parents, the community and media professionals. This will bring us closer to continued efforts to promote media literacy in every aspect of our lives.

Awareness and Knowledge: Tools for Living With the Media is a conference which will serve as an important step in opening dialogue between Quebec's francophone and anglophone educators, community workers, parents, researchers and media professionals and heighten awareness of the issues so that we may continue to explore them.

Judy Brandeis
Michel Pichette
Conference coordinators

Review

Media education starts at home

TV Alert: A Wake-up for Television Literacy produced by The Center for Media and Values, Los Angeles, CA.

This media literacy workshop kit stretches the term "education" beyond the traditional definition. That definition has suggested that the learning process is linear and primarily the responsiblity of schools and teachers. This package illustrates that, while schools are the appropriate place to begin, there is far more to media literacy than many assume, and it invites parents to participate in their children's interaction with the media.

To enable parents to share in the role of educating, facilitators may conduct workshops using *TV Alert: A Wake-up Guide for Television Literacy*. This workshop kit is comprised of a leader's guide and handout masters which provide valuable modules on topics such as: *Happy Media Families; TV Violence: Decoding the Danger*; and *Taking Charge: Strategies for Parenting in a TV Age*. The kit also includes, *Creating Critical TV Viewers*, a 77-minute video, which was unavailable for screening at time of publication.

Cost: $57.95
Information:
Center for Media and Values, 1962 Shenandoah St., Los Angeles, CA 90034 (310) 559-2944 FAX: (310) 559-9396
[JB]

A copy may be previewed at The Centre for Literacy.

Erratum

The review of *Television and the Quality of Life* by Robert Kubey and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (*Media Focus*, Spring Issue 1993) confuses the terms "quantitative" and "qualitative" in the final paragraph. It should read as follows: *The research methods may provoke some discussion. Media education advocates committed to the quantitative tradition may find themselves at odds with the method described in the book. Others, although comfortable with a qualitative approach, may be unfamiliar with what the authors call their 'quasi-naturalist approach." ..*

Media Focus regrets the error. Ed.

FALL 1993 Vol. 9 No. 3

Literacy across the curriculum

including Medi Focus

Connecting literacy in the schools, community and workplace

Teamwork, quality or the same old thing?

Teamwork, partnership, cooperative learning, have become catchphrases in both the education and business worlds. As soon as they are uttered, the listener is supposed to assume that they imply quality or excellence. Nothing could be further from reality.

Some years ago, our family lawyer in the context of drawing up a partnership agreement between my husband and a colleague, pointed out to them that good partnerships are relatively rare, and that a bad partnership can be as bad as, or worse than, a bad marriage.

This issue of *LAC* examines ideas about teamwork, partnerships and quality in workplaces, in literacy programs, and in schools. It looks at the identifying characteristics of good programs but questions those instances when the concept and the practice do not match.

Sheryl Gowen (p.5) questions the grafting of metaphors from one field to another without considering whether it is appropriate. She studies work systems that devalue the

knowledge of their workers and wonders how this practice shapes their assessment of workers' literacy. It is not an enormous leap to ask the same questions about our schools and the students who always measure up short.

One local instance of the misapplication of metaphors can be seen in the current Quebec education reforms. Here, good intentions are being translated by bureaucrats into unworkable formulas and diagram sheets borrowed from simplified versions of systems analysis. Applied to processes of learning, stages of achievement are being forced into little boxes with predictable invariable outcomes—an updated model of schools as factories in the name of an outmoded concept of "back to basics."

Sometimes "teamwork" and "partnership" are simply covers for more of the same old thing disguised as something new.

Glenda Lewe (pp.6-7) presents the different faces of teamwork, including those which talk the language of quality but maintain old-fashioned hierarchical relations among team members.

Sondra Stein (p.10) believes that total quality is positive and attainable even in volunteer educational settings. She offers a model of total quality indicators that can be used by community-based programs for measuring their progress and achievement.

Most of these articles could, without serious distortion, be adapted to apply to formal classrooms and students at any level in any discipline. [LS]

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The Centre for Literacy Montreal, Quebec

Literacy Across the Curriculum

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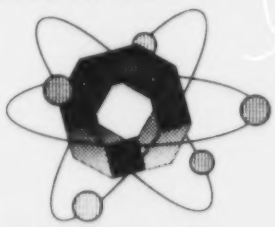
The Centre for Literacy/Le Centre d'Alphabétisation is a resource centre and teacher-training project designed to provide training, research, and information services which promote and link the advancement of literacy in the schools, the workplace and the community. The Centre gratefully acknowledges the support of the National Literacy Secretariat, Human Resources & Labour Canada and Dawson College.
President: David W. Perks



Literacy for the 21st century
Literacy encompasses a complex set of abilities to understand and use the dominant symbol systems of a culture for personal and community development. In a thechnological society, the concept of literacy is expanding to include the media and electronic text, in addition to alphabetic and number systems. These abilities vary in different social and cultural contexts according to need and demand. Individuals must be given life-long earning opportunities to move along a continuum that includes the reading and writing, critical understanding, and decision-making abilities they need in their community.

When partnership and teamwork come together

Both teamwork and partnership were epitomized in the June 1993 Summer Institute on Literacy. Built around the theme of "Developing a Vision for Workforce Education" and co-hosted by ABC CANADA and The Centre for Literacy, the Institute brought together 25 participants from across Canada for three and a half intensive days of talk, exchange, and study on the definition and practice of workplace literacy.

The 25 participants came from every part of the country and represented all the variety and diversity one has come to expect from Canadians. They came from government, from labour, from business, from community-based organizations, from educational institutions and from cooperatives. Although one of the goals was to develop a working definition of literacy to guide practice, the strongest aspect of the session was the integration of participants into the program as presenters. On the final evaluations, the opportunity for exchange and learning from one another was cited most often as the highlight of the entire institute.

From the beginning of the planning process for the institute, the two facilitators who shared a common vision agreed that they were looking for participants who had broad experience in some aspect of literacy education, preferably with a workplace focus. They designed an application that included a participant's area(s) of expertise and the questions they were most concerned to have addressed during the institute. The form indicated that participants would be invited to animate in particular sessions based on their responses. Finally, it said that after the institute each participant would be asked to carry out a project to be shared in some unspecified format at a later date.

From this start, the facilitators worked to design sessions that would draw on the strengths around the table and minimize the possible conflicts or areas of weakness. There were not enough sessions to give a full presentation to every participant, but there were breaks and lunches that could be used for informal exchanges, comfortable for the few participants who did not feel prepared to take responsibility for an entire presentation.

There was occasionally some tension among the group, occasionally some discomfort; yet overall, there was a sense of

BOX 1

Goals of the Institute

- To build consensus around principles of good practice
- To get an overview of workplace education in Canada
- To look at the tension between the social and economic dimensions of literacy
- To take a closer look at the planning process
- To exchange information on experiences in the field

respect even in disagreement. One of the most effective strategies of the few days was the use of a "Parking Lot"— a large sheet on the wall where we gathered contentious issues or questions that were not immediately relevant to a particular session, but were important enough to the entire discussion that we did not want to lose them. Some of them came up in relevant contexts and were addressed; then we took them off the wall. But at the end of the institute, we left time to look at those that remained. If we could not reach consensus, we at least agreed that these were issues that had to be taken home and kept alive. [LS]

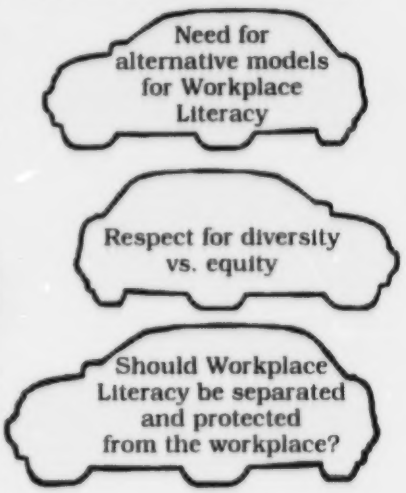
BOX 2

What participants said about the design and content of the 1993 Summer Institute, including the pacing, content, and use of participants as facilitators:

- I liked the variety of presentation formats (round table etc.). Enjoyed the perspectives of such a variety of people e.g. union, business, government.
- Excellent use of participants, both as facilitators & presenters.
- Small group sessions excellent. Content was excellent - very intensive.
  Pacing was good with sufficient time for feedback & discussion.
  Use of participants is a good idea as it presents the view from the provider's point of view.

- Excellent use of participants as facilitators. Pacing - good, leaders kept us on track.
- Très bon, le contenu était varié et les présentations de chacun a permis de mieux se connaitre. J'ai beaucoup apprécié voir ce qui se fait à travers le Canada.
- Using participants was good as we did not get bored with any straight lecture model. Content was excellent.
- There was a great deal of expertise in the room and it was nice to see it used.
- I enjoyed the highly (truly) interactive nature. It kept me on task and prevented distraction. Allowing participants to facilitate promoted ownership of the institute.
- I liked the use of participants as facilitators.
- Pacing, content, were all excellent...talk about guided collaborative or cooperative learning!
- The objectives were for the most part met. I think in part, because of the effective use of the various strengths and experiences of the participants.
- Glad you spent time on "parking lot" issues - these are often not addressed.

Some of Parking Lot issues still on the wall:


Need for alternative models for Workplace Literacy
Respect for diversity vs. equity
Should Workplace Literacy be separated and protected from the workplace?

A working definition of literacy adopted on the final day:

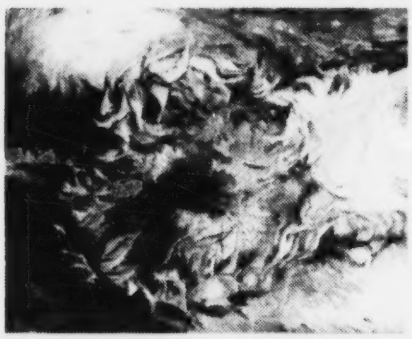
Literacy should facilitate the growth in the collective ability of people to shape the world in which they live, to take control of their lives individually and collectively. It should enable people to make their voices heard, to question, to criticize, evaluate, and act as full citizens with a broad social vision in a democratic society.
(adapted from the UFCW-OFL)

1994
Summer Institute
on Literacy
June 26 to 30, 1994
Montreal

Details available
in Winter 1994
Information: The Centre for
Literacy (514)931-8731,
local 1415

1 On art, writing, and creativity

Where other editors of Gauguin's writings have thrown in a few color reproductions as illustrations, here we have both sides of Gauguin's creative life. In a telling example, Ms. Thompson quotes an episode from "Before and After," the memoir Gauguin wrote just before his death, recalling his brief and ultimately tragic stay with van Gogh in Arles.



One of the Sunflower paintings by van Gogh.

"First of all, everything was in such a mess that I was shocked. The paint box was barely big enough to contain all the tubes that had been squeezed but never recapped, and yet, in spite of the chaos and the mess, his canvasses glowed."

After reading this, the eye wanders up the page to where Ms. Thomson has placed Gauguin's terrifying portrait of van Gogh painting his sunflowers. This image of exhausted obsession provoked van Gogh's anguished words "It is certainly I, but it is I gone mad," and was one of the main causes of his mental breakdown, which led him to attack Gauguin before he turned the razor on himself, slicing off part of his ear. Such telling juxtapositions allow Ms. Thomson to create not so much a biography as something akin to a split-screen film, a book that offers a far more subtle and complex portrait than would have been possible through either words or pictures alone.

David Sweetman, "The Savage Breast," Review of *Gauguin By Himself*, an edition of Gauguin's writings related to his art, *New York Times Book Review*, November 28, 1993, p.21.

2 On academic prose

In ordinary life, when a listener cannot understand what someone has said, this is the usual exchange:

Listener: I cannot understand what you are saying.

Speaker: Let me try to say it more clearly.

But in scholarly writing in the late 20th century, other rules apply. This is the implicit exchange:

Reader: I cannot understand what you are saying.

Academic Writer: Too bad. The problem is that you are an unsophisticated and untrained reader. If you were smarter, you would understand me.

The exchange remains implicit, because no one wants to say, "This doesn't make any sense", for fear that the response, "It would, if you were smarter", might actually be true.

While we waste our time fighting over ideological conformity in the scholarly world, horrible writing remains a far more important problem. For all their differences, most right-wing scholars and most left-wing scholars share a common allegiance to a cult of

obscurity. Left, right and center all hide behind the idea that unintelligible prose indicates a sophisticated mind. The politically correct and the politically incorrect come together in the violence they commit against the English language.

Patricia Nelson Limerick, "Dancing With Professors: The Trouble With Academic Prose", *New York Times Book Review*, October 31, 1993, p.3.

When systems work against literacy

Sheryl Gowen on workplace education

The U.S. National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS), published in September 1993, made some shocking claims about the functional literacy levels of Americans, suggesting that 90 million of their citizens have serious difficulties with basic reading and writing. Sheryl Gowen, from The Centre for The Study of Adult Literacy at the University of Georgia, and author of *The Politics of Workplace Literacy*, was one of two outside evaluators asked by the U.S. Department of Education to critique NALS in terms of its implications for the workplace.

During a late October visit to Montreal, Gowen threw a different light on the U.S. figures and posed a whole set of new questions that she believes should guide thinking about the connections among literacy, work, and productivity.

According to her findings, the majority of those Americans with the lowest levels of literacy are not unemployed or on welfare. They have low-level jobs which do not demand more literacy. Gowen asks whether, if we make these people more literate, there are in fact other jobs for them? She also asks exactly what are the perceived connections between literacy and productivity?

In her own research, first at a large Atlanta hospital and now in a rural quarry, Gowen has made a series of observations about how the organization of work influences workers' behaviour. She notes the problem of trying to map one way of organizing work onto another system where it does not apply. For example, early literacy programs in the U.S. were developed by the army on a functional context approach with the goal of skill-building as a prelude to promotion.

Many literacy programs still use the army model, but if grafted onto a system where promotion is not the norm, the model does not work. The hospital is such a system. Gowen points out that a hospital is essentially a static organization in terms of promotability, that is, a cleaner cannot rise to be a doctor.

> ***« If a system prevents workers from using knowledge they have, who has the problem? »***

Literacy is mapped onto a lot of class-driven behaviour. Print-dependent people tend to look down on those who are not print-dependent and make judgments about what they know. For example, in the Atlanta hospital, supervisors and managers generally did not acknowledge what workers in the bottom tier really knew. But Gowen had the opportunity to meet many of these workers socially, at church, and found that those who were considered illiterate at work had a whole repertoire of literate skills outside, as members of committees, choirs, etc.

Similarly, at the quarry, there is a rich community of practice, almost all oral. There is little dependence on print. Using heavy equipment, workers rarely consult a manual, but they do a lot of talking, on CB radio and face to face, and a lot of listening. They possess an immense amount of tacit knowledge that they do not even know they have. Yet if their knowledge or skills are ever assessed, it is always individually, usually with pencil and paper. Most people, Gowen believes, do not do as well on pencil and paper tasks as in performance. She suggests we consider how the implementation of new technology sometimes destroys existing communities of practice that give people the chance to create knowledge together. She asks, if a system prevents workers from using knowledge they have, who has the problem?

Gowen also has some reservations about Total Quality Management and the organization of work. When TQM is misapplied, she argues, workers are worked more. Does it benefit all stakeholders? And just what is the relationship between TQM and literacy? Does literacy per se produce quality?

Finally, Gowen wants to create awareness of the complexity of organizational interventions in the name of literacy. She warns of several dangers, among them burden-shifting, which can take different forms. One is a process of "shifting" an underlying organizational problem onto a more easily articulated/more easily solved problem, e.g. identifying literacy alone as the key to increased productivity. Another is burden-shifting to an intervenor, e.g. bringing in short-term outside help, which can often weaken a system and leave it even further in need.

As the rhetoric of literacy and productivity becomes more commonplace, Gowen reminds literacy practitioners that we have to expand our own repertoire of questions and concerns to avoid betaying the very people we believe we are helping.

[L.S.]

Teamwork cuts both ways

by Glenda Lewe

"Teamwork" has become a much-valued concept in the modern workplace. The Total Quality Management (TQM) movement has contributed to the rise in importance of "teamwork." Quality workplaces are oriented towards a systems approach to production and output; by working in teams, individual workers get to know both their role in the system and how they can best "optimize" the system. It takes a new kind of thinking and a new kind of trust.

However, there are DIFFERENT concepts of teamwork. I experienced one of them at a recent seminar I attended in New Orleans. The name of the exercise was "LOST IN THE DESERT." On the surface, it looked like an ideal team working exercise. Teams were randomly chosen, brought together as equals and had a common goal. They were an ideal size (4-6), male and female. Participants were asked to prioritize 15 items necessary to their survival. A process for consensus-seeking was established for the exercise, which started with each person doing an individual rating and then seeking a group rating. There was one additional task in which a small mechano derrick was assembled by these same teams.

The exercises were intended as practical hands-on-tools for basic skills practitioners and other adult educators to try out the team concept and to understand how its dynamics will affect our future work with workplace literacy initiatives.

Old-style teamwork

Yet, as I watched the team exercises unfold (and participated in my own team), I was struck with uneasiness. Something was wrong. I was unable to pinpoint my concern until later that day, after discussion with a colleague and friend who had also attended the session. Suddenly, the problem became clear. We realized with a start that there are several kinds of teamwork, and that the exercises we had just participated in belonged more to the old hierarchical style of management than to the new "quality" approach. We felt the exercise was actually a dangerous and false example which could lead educators down a blind path. What we had seen was a highly competitive team, with aggression winning out over introspection and little effort to find true consensus.

What led us to this conclusion? And–if there are indeed several kinds of teamwork–how are they differentiated?

To answer these questions, we had to go back to the constitution of the teams. The teams were assembled randomly (determined by where people sat in the room) rather than according to people's areas of expertise. Since no effort had been made to form teams based on a logic of the contribution each member could make, the teams became dominated by a few strong individuals. There was no effort by these individuals to solicit meaningful "other" input, since there was no reason to believe that others had anything of significance to contribute.

Quality teamwork

In a quality-oriented workplace, where systems and processes are important, each team member is recognized as having something unique and valuable to contribute based on a role within the system. For instance, in a cookie company, if the team is looking at how to bring a production line into statistical control, the contributions of the baker who bakes the cookies, the packer who packs the products and the mechanic who services the machinery are all of significance. They are not COMPETING within the team, as in the examples I saw.

In the quality concept of teamwork, workers contribute to the group their own expertise, based on their role within the system, and their knowledge of procedures and of the prior and subsequent stages of the processes they are working with. This means that each team member is doing something different from every other member — contributing a perspective based on "unique contribution" rather than on competition. This concept requires analysis by team members of how TOGETHER the various areas of expertise displayed by team members can be used to optimize the system.

Challenge to adult educators

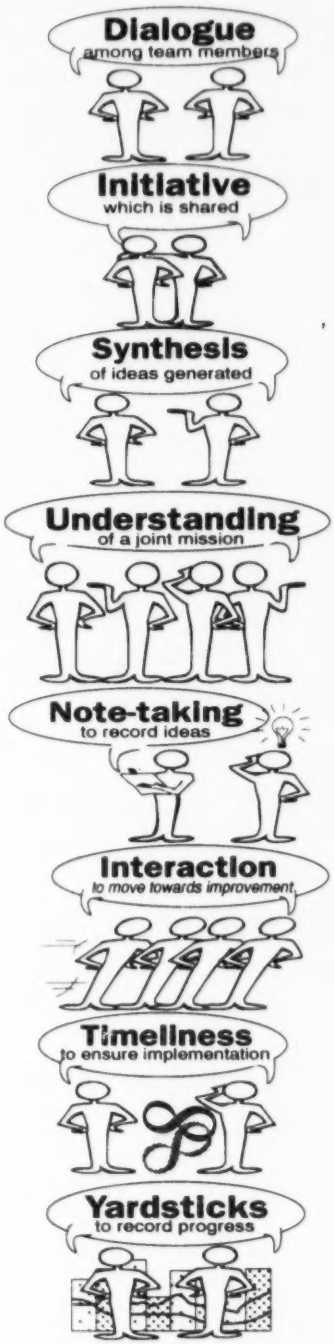
If all this is a challenge to the managers and workers themselves, adult educators who may be called into a workplace as consultants on training programs such as Basic Skills need to understand the principles of this new teamwork before they can design and implement appropriate programs. If workplaces are becoming more "laterally" focused because of teamwork, then basic skills programs will need to reflect that reality in course intake. More and more, programs will be designed to reflect diversity in divisions and levels rather than organized according to hierarchy or rank. Course content will also be influenced. Workers need different skills to work in teams than to work as individuals; an added importance is placed on oral communication (speaking and listening), problem-solving, note-taking, drawing flow diagrams and control charts.

For anyone wishing to explore further the dynamics of a Team within the "Total Quality" concept, I highly recommend *The Team Handbook*, by Continuous Improvement expert Peter R. Scholtes, available from Joiner Associates, Madison Wisconsin. [G.L.]

Glenda Lewe, an Ottawa-based workplace consultant, specializes in organizational analysis, skills development and communications. Tel: (613) 233-3783.

Quality teamwork is a system based on:

All of which work well together when moving on a lateral plane — but when looked at hierarchically and vertically, spell...spell...Well, how could it be that all these positive characteristics could come together in a less than positive way, spelling DISUNITY? The villain is the old model intra-team competition which can neutralize even the most sterling qualities that participants bring to a work team.



Drawing some further links to literacy: ABE students respond

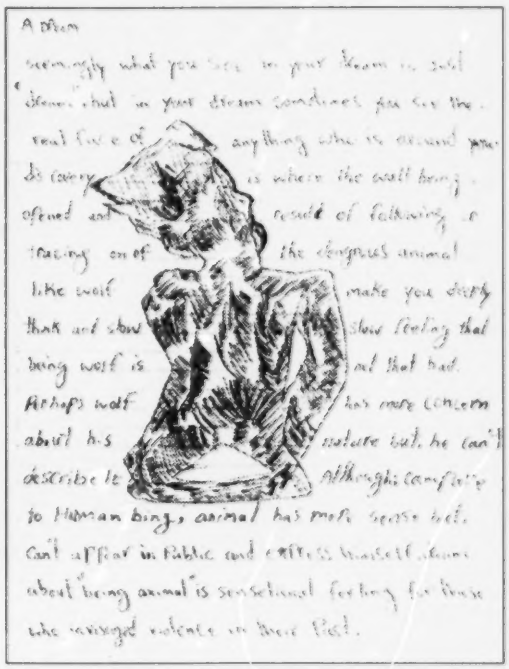
In an earlier issue of *LAC*, I wrote at length about some classroom research that art teacher Catherine Bates and I have carried on for almost two years specifically exploring the ways in which drawing/painting can be used as modes of creativity along with writing. Last year, we published a collection of student drawing and writing entitled *Drawing: A link to literacy*, where we suggested that drawing for adult students functions as an untapped way of knowing and also stimulates oral and written literacy.

Unfortunately, ways of knowing/learning visually have been effectively filtered out of almost all adolescent and adult classrooms except in Fine Arts programs or in therapeutic situations (art as therapy).

However, our experiment, supplemented by those of colleagues who have shared some of their own work with us, is pushing us to continue our project.

One colleague who has adapted some of our ideas is her own classroom is Montreal ABE teacher Isa Helfield. This fall, she took a set of *Drawing: A link to literacy* to her adult English class, read some

A Dream
A while ago
I had an odd dream
That struck my mind.
In the dream I was
not a man and not a
wolf but a strange
mixture of both. I
lived in a nightmarish
city filled with
people who shunned
me because I was
diffrent. In this
dream I sat in
a dark corner and
watched those that
went by. After a while
the flow of people
stopped and a hole
oppened in the wall
of bodies and a
lone wolf walked
trough I got up
and followed the
wolf as it turned
and left. It lead
me to the edge
of town and
into a dark forest.
After travelling for
only a few minutes,
we came out into
a clearing which
was filled with
wolves. I realized,
with extreme
joy that I was
a wolf.
A.B.


A dream
seemingly what you see in your dream is just
"dream," but in your dreams sometimes you see the
real face of anything who is around you
Discovery is where the wall being
opened and result of following or
tracing on of the dengrous animal
like wolf make you deeply
think and slow slow feeling that
being wolf is not that bad
Perhaps wolf has more concern
about his nature but, he can't
describe it Although; compare to Human bing, animal has more sense but,
can't appear in public and express himself. dream about "being animal" is sensetional feeling for those
who invisaged violence in their past.

Drawing: A link to Literacy p.37.

A Dream
by Ronni Alampour

Seemingly what you see in your dream is just "dream," but in your dream sometimes you see the real face of anything who is around you. Discovery is where the wall being opened and result of following or tracing on of the dengrous animal - like wolf make you deeply think and slow slow feeling that being wolf is not that bad. Perhaps wolf has more concern about his nature but, he can't describe it. Although; compare to Human bing, animal has more sense but, can't appear in public and express himself. dream about "being animal" is sensetional feeling for those who invisaged violence in their past.

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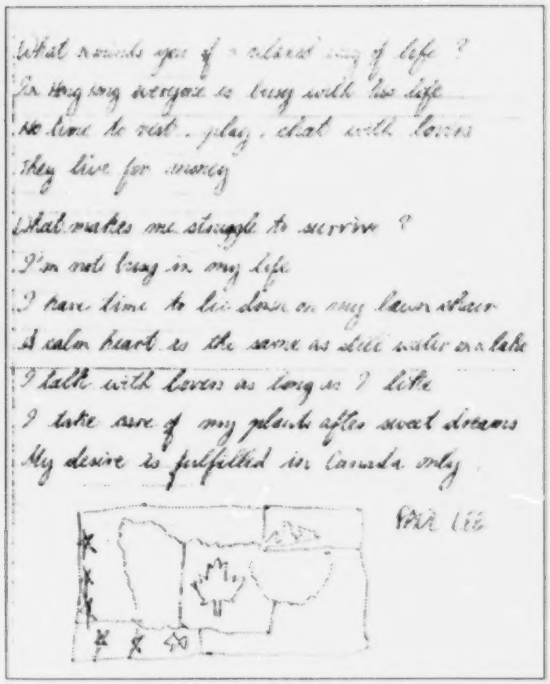
of the work aloud with them and gave them each the text to read through within that class period. Then she suggested that they might wish to write and draw something of their own, either in response to what they had just read or on another subject that meant something to them. Just as Catherine's students had been immersed in the task she had set, so were Isa's students. With their limited command of English, they still produced powerful rough drafts far more compelling than anything elicited by a standard textbook exercise.

Reproduced here are two samples, the original piece of writing/drawing from the published text beside the ones produced by Isa's students. Of some interest, beside the strength of thought in these samples, is the evidence of just how personal a process reading is. Note the transformation of subject in each case. In "Thirteen We Stand," S.H. expressed his patriotism and his chagrin at the "petty squabbles" he saw threatening Canada during the constitutional debates in 1991. For Paul Lee, the poem and drawing call forth an intensely personal comparison of life in Hong Kong and Canada. The drawing was the stimulus for his poem. How many of us have ever written a line to rival "A calm heart is the same as still water on a lake?" [L.S.]

Drawing: A link to Literacy p. 25.

Thirteen we stand
Anything less and we'll fall
To be reassimilated one and all
And then will come a time
That every one of us will hate
Being the newest addition of the United States.

So I ask you now
All those whpo believe themselves " Distinct"
To forget about your petty squables and think
About the country we have
With its majesty and grace
And put Canada first and everyone else in their place.
S.H.


What reminds you of a relaxed way of life ?
In Hong Kong everyone is busy with his life
No time to rest, play, chat with lovers
They live for money
What makes one struggle to survive ?
I'm not busy in my life
I have time to lie down on my lawn chair
A calm heart is the same as still water on a lake
I talk with lovers as long as I like
I take care of my plants after sweet dreams
My desire is fulfilled in Canada only.
Paul Lee

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by Paul Lee

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Total quality in community-based programs

Review of Framework for Assessing Program Quality. A Community Based Approach to Literacy Program Evaluation, by Sondra Gayle Stein. Association for Community Based Education, Washington, 1993, 34 pages.

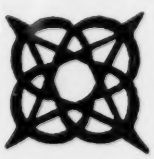
This handbook is constructed on the premise that the principles of quality management work and can be as effectively applied in volunteer, community based programs as they can in business and formal education settings.

Sondra Stein writes that she was "especially interested in communicating the central idea of TQM: That changes in **how** a program does things results in changes in such bottom line issues as retention and achievement."

Stein identifies three defining characteristics for the framework:
1) It is a diagnostic tool.
2) It is a systemic approach to quality, i.e. it not only identifies key elements for program success, but shows how these elements relate to each other.
3) It is not prescriptive.

The following excerpt illustrates the type of indicators and measures that can be used by a community based program as evidence of systemic support for developing critical literacy in quality programs.

Indicators	*Sample Measures*
a. *Processes and structures are in place to ensure that assessment is participatory, is integrated into the instructional process, focuses on learner strengths, and occurs at frequent intervals.*	○ *learners have opportunities to identify their literacy practices, articulate and analyze their beliefs about literacy, and expand their repertoire of literacy strategies.* ○ *program uses a range of assessment methods, eg. competency-based simulations, performance of real life tasks, daily logs, portfolio collection and analysis, standardized tests.*
b. *Processes and structures are in place for building learners' knowledge and skills through curriculum which respects differences in goals, preferred learning styles, background and experience, language and culture.*	○ *program uses learner-centered instructional strategies, building curriculum in response to identified learner and community interests and concerns.* ○ *program is adequately supplied with sufficient books, materials and equipment appropriate to learners' needs, background, language and culture.*
c. *Processes and structures are in place for generating curriculum and integrating materials about problems/issues learners raise.*	○ *frequency with which learners bring issues to classroom.* ○ *checklist of issues they bring.* ○ *existence of curriculum/materials reflecting issues learners bring.*
d. *Processes and structures are in place that engage staff and learners as co-investigators of adult literacy beliefs and practices, of adult learning strategies, and of factors that enable adults to change their literacy practices and use developing literacy skills in life situations.*	○ *program staff develop and practice skills in participatory research.* ○ *learners are encouraged to value their own experience and knowledge through activities that engage them in analysing their own literacy practices within the program and their larger world.*



To order *Framework for Assessing Program Quality*, send US $10 plus postage and handling to Association for Community Based Education (ACBE), 1805 Florida Avenue N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009, Tel: (202) 462-6333; Fax: (202) 232-8044. [L.S.]

Literacy Partners of Quebec Annual General Meeting

Literacy Partners of Quebec (LPQ), the English-language literacy coalition in Quebec, held its AGM on November 4, 1993 in conjunction with the AGM of The Movement for Canadian Literacy, at Dawson College in Montreal.

LPQ chose its new board and executive for 1993-94. The officers are:

President.....**Linda Shohet**
Vice-President.....**Leona Grisé**
Secretary.....**Marion Daigle**
Treasurer.....**t.b.a.**

(L. to R.) Ann Gauvin, Past President LPQ; James Moore, student; Linda Shohet, President LPQ.

(L.) Roy Bourke, President MCL; (R.) Nancy Jennings, Executive-Director MCL.

(L. to R.) LPQ Coordinator Isa Helfield, Grace Saabas, Heron Owers.

LPQ Vice-president Leona Grisé

Roslyn Cohen and Julie Greto

LPQ Board member Johanne Bilodeau & student committee coordinator Scott McKeown.

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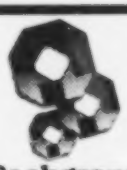


1994 RESOURCE-TEACHER PROJECT (WINTER 1994)

The Centre for Literacy of Quebec & The Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women

Literacy and minority women learners

Background

The Resource-teacher project is a collaborative learning group of teachers/tutors or community workers drawn from different milieus (schools, colleges, work, community-based organizations) making the connection between literacy and opportunities. It has been offered at The Centre for Literacy since 1990. The project for 1994 is dedicated to women from cultural minorities. Many of these women have been denied access to education in their own countries and continue to face formidable barriers in Canada.

Objectives

1. To read about and discuss various aspects of literacy and culture: Early literacy, adult basic literacy, workplace/ workforce literacy, women and literacy, media literacy, etc. and to develop an operational definition of literacy that is culture and gender-sensitive.
2. To study task designs and group organization/methods that integrate reading, writing, speaking, listening, and critical analysis to empower women as learners.
3. To develop culture and gender-sensitive materials and approaches for women in minority communities or an alternate related project decided upon by the participant and the sponsoring school/college or community organization.
4. To provide opportunities for participants to present their projects at conferences and meetings.

We invite participants to add their own objectives to these. Because each participant brings years of experience in different areas, we have established a collaborative model that fosters the sharing of expertise. We encourage participants to concentrate on a project that is personally compelling.

Criteria

For 1994, the Resource-teacher project wants to include teachers, social workers and tutors working with women from cultural communities. We will weigh applications according to the possibility of participants applying their work directly in their own milieu.

Anyone interested in participating will be asked for a letter outlining the reasons for her interest and acknowledging an understanding of and commitment to the project objectives.

Dates

Beginning the first week of February 1994 - May 1994. Weekly meetings at The Centre for Literacy, 3040 Sherbrooke Street West, Room 4B-1, Montreal.

Fees: None. Participants must be released/supported by their institutions or organizations and make a commitment for the full session. The Centre for Literacy provides the training through its grant from The National Literacy Secretariat, Human Resources and Labour Canada.

Information: (514) 931-8731, local 1415. We can tell you whom to contact at your institution or organization to facilitate participation.

Thinking critically about language, race & gender

(in collaboration with The Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women [CCLOW])

Leaders: Olivia Rovinescu, Concordia University
Clifton Ruggles, Concordia University, PSBGM
Date: Saturday, January 29, 1994
Place: Dawson College
Time: 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Fee: $80.00 (includes materials and lunch)

This workshop will help participants learn how to think critically about race and gender. Emphasis will be placed on the process of analyzing racist and sexist language particularly as it affects women's learning.

The workshop will also help participants explore the extent to which the "politics of one's location" and prior belief system influence the reasoning process. What counts as valid reasons and valid evidence upon which to base an argument, and how do cultural assumptions about race and gender hinder both access to, and possibilities of, learning for women?

Montreal Conferences

Learning Disabilities Association of Quebec

19th International Conference
"Learning Side by Side"
March 17 – 19, 1994
Information: Tel: (514) 847-1324;
Fax: (514) 281-5187

Springboards 1994

English Language Arts Conference
April 14 – 15, 1994

Chronological Conference Listing

1993 Modern Language Association

December 26 – 30, 1993
Toronto, ON

College Composition and Communication (CCCC) Winter Workshop

January 6 – 8, 1994
Clearwater Beach, FL

1994 Annual Conference on Lifelong Learning

"Re-educating America: Technology and Higher Education"
February 16 – 18, 1994
San Diego, CA
Information: Jim Boss (619) 563-7144

1994 Conference on College Composition and Communication

March 16 – 19, 1994
Nashville, TN

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development

March 19 – 22, 1994
Chicago, IL
Information: ASCD, 1250 N. Pitt St., Alexandria VA 22314, (703) 549-9110

Bard College Institute for Writing and Thinking

"How to Read a Book"
April 15, 1994
Simon's Rock Campus
Great Barrington, MA

International Reading Association (IRA)

May 8 – 12, 1994
Toronto, ON
Information: IRA Conference Division, 800 Barksdale Rd., P.O. Box 8139, Newark, DE 19714, USA

Canadian Council for Teachers of English and Language Arts (CCTELA)

"Literacy Through the Looking Glass"
May 4 – 7, 1994
Moncton, NB

Whole Language Umbrella

July 14 –17, 1994
San Diego, CA

Media Education: Instructional Imperatives for the Year 2000

NCTE Commission on Media Assembly & National Telemedia Council
July 22 – 24, 1994
University of Wisconsin
Information: Karen Neither, NCTE, Tel: (217) 328-3870, ext. 203

Global Conversations on Language and Literacy

International conference co-sponsored by NCTE, The National Writing Project and Department of Defense Dependents Schools (DoDDS)
August 15 -17, 1994
Oxford, England
Information: Linda Oldham, NCTE, Tel: (217) 328-3870 ext. 282; fax: (217) 328-9645

National Conference on Family Literacy

October 1994
Ottawa, ON

National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)

November 14 – 16, 1994
Orlando, FL

International Reading Association (IRA)

April 30 – May 4, 1995
Anaheim, CA

Summer Institutes

Summer Institute for Teachers of Literature

"Literature of the Americas: A Critical Perspective
National Council of Teachers of English
College Section
June 5 – 8, 1994
Myrtle Beach, SC

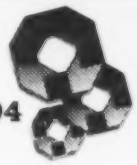
Bard College Summer Workshops

Institute for Writing and Thinking includes:
Writing to Learn
Visual Thinking
Exploring Women's Writing
Writing Retreat for Teachers, and more
July 11 -15, 1994
Annendale-on-Hudson, NY
Information: (914) 758-7432

Details on listings available from The Centre for Literacy, (514) 931-8731, local 1415.

LPQ

Literacy Partners of Quebec & The Centre for Literacy of Quebec



Reading Recovery Information Session: Thursday, January 20, 1994

What is reading recovery?

Reading Recovery is an early, short term intervention program for the lowest achieving students in grade one, regardless of their ethnic, linguistic or socio-economic background, intelligence, language achievment, physical handicaps or learning disabilities.

What is its goal?

Its goal is to enable these at-risk students to make accelerated progress and to become competent, independant readers within the average band of literacy achievment in approximately 12 to 20 weeks of daily 30-minute lessons.

Date: Thursday, January 20, 1994
Time: 7:30 – 9:30 P.M.
Place: Dawson College, Room t.b.a.
Presenters: Fergus Reid, Site Coordinator, Canadian Institute for Reading Recovery
Bonnie O'Donoghue, Coordinator of Early Literacy and Reading Recovery, Scarborough Board of Education

Session 1 Overview: An introduction to Reading Recovery
Topics will include historical perspective, research, structure, teacher training, and a child's lesson.
Leaders: Fergus Reid and Bonnie O'Donoghue
Audience: Teachers and administrators

Session IIA For teachers only
Topics will include detailed lesson components, diagnostic procedures, analysis of student's reading
Leader: Bonnie O'Donoghue

Session IIB For administrators only
Topics will include system implementation, impact on early literacy development, cost analysis, staff development.
Leader: Fergus Reid

The evening will be divided into three sessions for teachers and administrators:

N.B. The presenters will be available for consultation and more individual discussion on Friday morning, January 21. Those most likely to benefit from this session are teachers and administrators who have done prior research on Reading Recovery and would like to explore the specifics of implementing it in a particular board/institution. No charge for either session; registration required to ensure availability of space.
R.S.V.P (514) 931-8731, local 1415, by Monday, January 17.

The Centre for Literacy and Dawson College 1993– 1994 Workshops Seminars

Numeracy: The relationship between mathematics and language
Leader: Brian Smith, Dawson College
Date: Thursday, Feb. 8, 1994
Time: 5:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Rethinking workplace literacy: Building programs that make sense in a changing workplace
Leader: Sondra Stein, National Institute for Literacy, Washington, D.C.
Date: Thursday, April 7, 1994
Time: 5:30 p.m. to 9.00 p.m.

Virtual Realities: From the concrete to the barely imaginable
Leader: Stephen Marcus, University of California
Date: Friday, April 14, 1994
Time: 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Designing brief writing/thinking assignments across the disciplines
Leader: John Bean, Seattle University
Date: Friday, May 27, 1994
Time: 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

For information: Catherine Duncan, (514) 931-8731, local 1415. Fax: (514) 931-5181.

Information request

• On seniors' literacy projects

Information is requested from anyone involved in projects on literacy related to seniors and looking at the following issues:

- Public awareness of the need for seniors' literacy programs
- Literacy levels as an indicator of seniors being able to access services
- Alternative methods of providing information for seniors with low levels of literacy

Contact: Jean Dirk, Something Special for Seniors, Medicine Hat College, 299 College Drive S.E., Medicine Hat, AB, T1A 3Y6
Tel: (403) 517-4303;
Fax:(403) 527-0459

• On health and family planning in ABE/ESL classrooms

The Massachusetts System for Adult Basic Education Support (SABES) provides staff and program development support for adult education programs across the state. They are looking for information on ABE or ESL teachers and programs addressing health and family planning in the classroom. They are interested primarily in good, innovative, unpublished curricula, training packets, classroom materials, and in teachers who are developing and using these materials.
To share, contact Lou Wollrab, SABES Information Coordinator, Internet ID: sabes@world.std.com
If you are not on Internet, contact NALD: Tel: (519) 452-4446; Fax: (519) 451-8831. They will send your information on to SABES.

Call for papers/proposals

• Women, literacy and development Convergence 1994

Convergence is an international journal of adult education published by the International Council for Adult Education. In preparation for its Fifth World Assembly in the Arab region in September 1994, and in recognition of the United Nations Fourth World Conference in 1995 on Women's Action for Equality, Development and Peace, the Council is publishing a special issue on the conference theme: Women, Literacy and Development. Although the issue will highlight the educational challenges and actions of women of the Arab region, the editors welcome articles from all regions.

Some preliminary ideas for exploration:

- Discussion of the higher illiteracy rates for women in some regions
- The challenges women face in accessing literacy programs
- Descriptions of case studies, successful projects
- Exploration of how to strengthen adult education organizations to support the education and work of women
- Discussion of how illiteracy prevents women from achieving equity in terms of control over land, financial resources, education, work, politics and decision-making
- Discussion of how and if literacy programs for women combat poverty
- Examination of the role of women's organizations — development work vs. charity

In an effort to maintain regional and gender balance in content, *Convergence* invites proposals before accepting articles.
Proposal deadline: January 31, 1994. Article (2500 words) deadline: March 30, 1994
Send to: Convergence, International Council for Adult Education, 720 Bathurst Street, #500, Toronto, ON, M5S 2R4.
Tel: (416) 588-1211;
Fax: (416) 588-5725; Internet-mail: icae@web.apc.org

• Conference for Teachers of English and Language Arts (CCTELA)

Moncton, NB, May 4 - 7, 1994
Literacy Through the Looking Glass
Forms available from: Pam Sheridan Weldon, 574 Salisbury Road, Moncton, NB, E1E 1B8; Tel: (506) 855-1017

• Whole Language Umbrella 5th Annual International Conference

"Inviting Diversity"
San Diego, CA
July 14 -17, 1994
90-minute sessions
Forms available from: Virginia Little, 814 Amiford Drive, San Diego, CA 92107-4206,
Tel: (619) 223-4328
Deadline: December 31, 1993

Homespun/Family Literacy Instruction Seminar

March 1 – 3, 1994
Brooks Campus, Medicine Hat College Brooks AB
This seminar will provide participants with a foundation in family literacy and with the information needed to instruct a Homespun program. Curriculum and parent handbook included.
Fee: $363.80 (GST included)
Deadline: February 24, 1994
Information: Bonnie Annicchiarico or Karen Nelson (403) 362-1677.

Publications

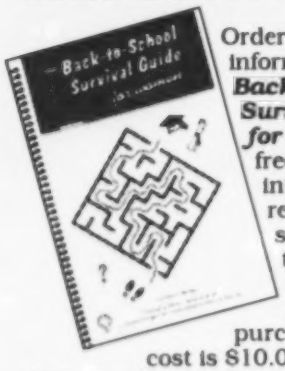
The Back-to School Survival Guide for Women , by Nora D. Randall, published by the B.C. Network of the Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women.

The notion of returning to school has crossed the minds of many women, but it often seems confusing, daunting, or plain impossible. Recognizing that going back to school is different for every woman who begins the

continued on page 16

continued from page15

process, this book guides a woman through the major steps. It helps her ask the right questions and provides important information about returning to a learning environment. With practical advice from real-life scenarios, and acknowledging the lighter side of a journey which has its ups and downs, this guide emphasizes that with persistence and determination, it can be done.



Ordering information: ***The Back-to School Survival Guide for Women*** is free to women interested in returning to school. For those who can afford to purchase, the cost is $10.00 + 7% GST. To obtain a free copy or copies, please send a cheque or money order to cover cost of mailing as listed below. If purchasing, enclose $10.00/copy + GST.

Mailing costs: 1-20 copies, $3.75; 20 + copies, 2% of total order (# of books x $10.00 x .02 = cost of mailing).
Send to: CCLOW -BC Network, c/o Bonjour Books, #230 - 8711 Beckwith Road, Richmond, BC, V6X 1V4 Tel: Toll-free: 1-800-665-8002

DRAWING: A link to Literacy
Stunning drawings and moving texts on social and personal issues that touch us all – war, race, love, AIDS, pollution – produced by college students.
To order a copy send a cheque for $10.00 plus $3.00 shipping & handling plus applicable sales tax(es) in Canada. Cheque is payable to The Centre for Literacy, 3040 Sherbrooke Street West, Montreal, Quebec, H3Z 1A4.
Information on special price for multiple copies: (514) 931-8731, local 1415.

Promises to keep
The following paragraph appeared in "Comment and Opinion", by Neville Nankivell, in *The Financial Post*, Thursday, November 4, 1993:
" The new Liberal government — being sworn in today in the same Rideau Hall where the [Canada Post Corporation 1993 Flight for Freedom] literacy awards were presented— has rightly promised to continue the National Literacy Program set up in 1988. It will also restore a recent 20% cut in funding. Originally a $110-million, five-year commitment, the program supports various literacy initiatives."

To subscribe, complete this form and mail it with your cheque to:
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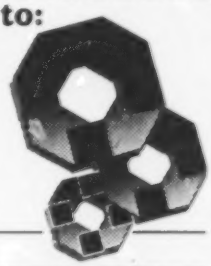

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VOL 3 No. 3 FALL 1993

Media FOCUS

THE CENTRE FOR LITERACY

McLuhan on media literacy

Perhaps this age of specialists is in need of creative trespassers.
— Arthur Koestler, The Sleepwalkers

Listening to Eric McLuhan, I think of Koestler's creative trespassers, the rare individuals who defy the age of specialization to roam in varied fields of knowledge. McLuhan is a humanist in an electronic world, a man trained in the classics and traditional literary studies who stretches the frame to examine new media and technology.

Eric McLuhan facilitated an exchange on media literacy in early October at The Centre for Literacy. In a low-key, self-deprecating manner, he drew on a lifetime of theory-building by his father and himself to establish the "ground" for the evening's discussion. McLuhan has spent much of his learning life developing a set of "laws" that could account for Marshall McLuhan's and his own understanding of media and its impact on human beings. Their findings rely heavily on theories of perception.

For much of the evening, McLuhan pulled on some of his key assumptions or "discoveries" as a way of getting the audience to question some of their own assumptions about media. One of those discoveries is that "each of man's artefacts is in fact a kind of word, a metaphor that translates experience from one form into another." (*Laws*, p.3) Another is that "it makes no difference whatever whether one considers as artefacts or as media things of a tangible "hardware" nature such as bowls and clubs or forks and spoons, or tools and devices and engines, railways,...computers, and so on; or things of a "software" nature such as theories or laws of science, philosophical systems, ...forms or styles in painting or poetry or drama or music, and so on." (*Laws*, p.3).

Eric McLuhan at The Centre for Literacy, October 1993.

The segments on pages 2 – 3 are a selection of McLuhan's comments, illustrations, and responses to questions on that evening. Most of this issue of *Media Focus* is devoted to reprinting (with permission) textual excerpts which elaborate McLuhan' s theoretical position on media; there are also some practical applications for teaching. On page 4 are fuller discussions, excerpted from books and speeches, of some of the ideas touched on below. A selection of classroom applications starts on p. 6 and *Laws of Media* is reviewed on p.8.

Like all trespassers, McLuhan generates

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Medi FOCUS

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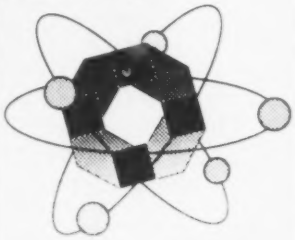


Literacy for the 21st century
Literacy encompasses a complex set of abilities to understand and use the dominant symbol systems of a culture for personal and community development. In a thechnological society, the concept of literacy is expanding to include the media and electronic text, in addition to alphabetic and number systems. These abilities vary in different social and cultural contexts according to need and demand. Individuals must be given life-long earning opportunities to move along a continuum that includes the reading and writing, critical understanding, and decision-making abilities they need in their community.

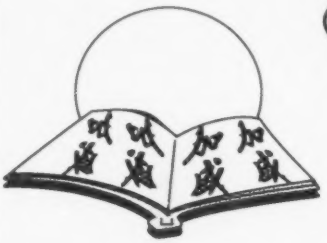
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

strong reactions from specialists in many of the fields he crosses — literary critics, communications specialists, psychologists... But, at the least, McLuhan provokes ways of thinking about media that set them both inside and against a tradition of literacy. Anyone either studying or teaching media has something to gain by testing McLuhan's laws. [LS]

A gathering of McLuhan thoughts on media

Figure/ground as the starting point of perception

We have areas of attention and inattention which can be conceived as figure and ground. Most people tend to confine attention to the content i.e. what we have called figure. But it is the ground of any situation that is in charge. ..
Always ask what is the ground in any situation.



• The transformative power of a medium

The content of any medium is always an older medium i.e. the content of TV is movies, of movies is novels and books, of books is speech, something like a series of Chinese boxes, but the moment one medium envelopes another, it transforms it. A movie on TV is no longer a movie, does not have the effect of a movie. One medium transforms another. The impact of a movie from the video store is TV.

• On musak

One of the greatest art forms of the past thirty years is musak. It was designed to be ignored, but to have an effect when ignored that it could not have if attended to; it creates an environment .. Its designers have engineered out all the figure.

• Artefacts as media

What is the medium of the car? ... the road and, by extension, gas, oil companies, Middle East politics, suburbs..etc. Looking at any medium, you have to do an inventory. How do they affect the way we live? How do they relate to one another? The content of car, TV, video, etc. is the user.

• Differences between film and TV

On a movie screen, every frame is static; it moves between full image and no image. All action occurs when the screen is blank; it is supplied by the viewer unconsciously. (One is aware of it in somewhat in silent film.) The viewer is working madly providing the movement.
On a TV screen, there are always a few dots or lines. The image is filled in by the viewer. A movie is filled in frame by frame. In TV, blanks are filled in.

• An experiment in perception — film/TV

McLuhan described an experiment he conducted at Fordham University in the late 1960s:
Students watched three short films shown on two sides of a bedsheet, one side with direct light, the other with reflected light to simulate the effects of film and TV.
After viewing each film, the students were asked to record a personal response. While there were not absolute differences, there were patterns, regardless of the level of sophistication or background Those on the "film" side of the screen wrote like film critics, commenting on story, narrative, continuity, shots, etc. Those on the "TV" side of the screen talked about themselves— how they felt, dreams they had had, memories, colour, mythic interpretation.

• TV and interpersonal distance

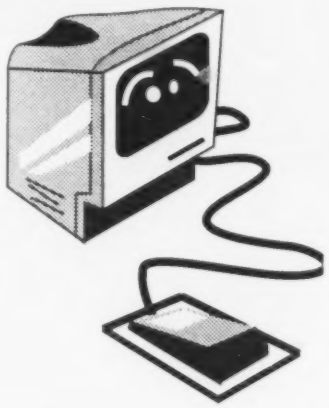
TV is a medium of close-up. Ned Hall, in *The Hidden Dimension*, analyzes distance

between people and points out that the sense of interpersonal distance is cultural. Kids reared on TV like to be closer to one another than adults over 40 do. What we do not yet know is how kids raised on TV organize themselves and their circumstances for communication?

• A study of TV studies
Merrilyn Emery, a researcher in New South Wales(1985) wrote a thesis on all studies of TV ever done. Among her conclusions: TV is a maladaptive, but potent medium; all effects studied are entirely subliminal. It offers nothing that improves users (in epileptics, certain frequencies trigger seizures). She claims there is no evidence that video games improve hand-eye coordination.

• Medium as message
Experiments with EEG and ads in different media have proved that response is determined by the technology. The organism responds to the technology.

• Computer editing and writing style
Don't edit on screen—you can't see what you want to catch The left side of the brain likes abstract logic, detail. Light behind the screen calls on the right brain which is holistic. A PC word processor book on screen has the effect of TV.
New styles of writing are emerging from the use of the computer because the computer/TV screen likes a short attention span. For example, the average sentence length of about 9 to 20 words has been getting shorter through the twentieth century. The average length of a Harlequin Romance sentence is 9 words. There are also two new kinds of



paragraphs in business writing; the highly dramatic, quick-moving 1 to 2 sentence paragraph, and the 2 to 3 sentence topic-development paragraph which sets up an hypnotic rhythm.

• Alphabetic abstraction
The first 80 pages of *Laws of Media* was an analysis of the alphabet as the great abstracter that splits conscious/unconscious, and figure/ground. It puts the left brain in orbit, exactly the opposite of TV/computer which appeals to the right side

• Postliteracy
The end of literacy and beginning of postliteracy coincide with the advent of speed reading and colour TV in the 1960s.

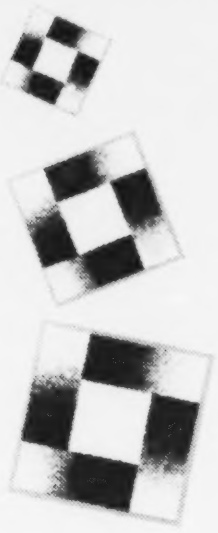
A journal called McLuhan studies

McLuhan Studies, edited by Eric McLuhan, began publication in 1991 following a renewal of interest in McLuhan's life and work in the late 1980s. *The Antigonish Review* (1988) devoted a full issue to McLuhan and republished it as a book one year later. *Laws of the Media* appeared in 1988 and was immediately translated into half a dozen languages. Philip Marchand brought out his biography in 1989. And McLuhan's early writings were being reissued.

According to its editor, its purpose is to examine, discuss, and to continue the work of Marshall McLuhan. *McLuhan Studies* has three aims: to present material written by Marshall McLuhan, but previously unpublished, to print articles about his work and writings, and to seek fresh material from various fields and of the kind that interested him.

McLuhan Studies can be ordered from Department of Italian Studies, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5S 1A1.
In Canada, $25.00 CDN/issue; in U.S./overseas, $25.00 US.

Elaboration on some McLuhan concepts



These excerpts were reprinted from Laws of Media and from a presentation given to the Ontario Council of Teachers of English (OCTE) in 1989. A note following each indicates the source.

Figure and ground as basis of perception

Figure' and 'ground' entered Gestalt psychology from the work of Edgar Rubin, who about 1915 used those terms to discuss aspects of visual perception. They have here been broadened to embrace the whole structure of perception and of consciousness. All situations comprise an area of attention (figure) and a very much larger area of inattention (ground). The two continually coerce and play with each other across a common outline or boundary or interval that serves to define both simultaneously. The shape of one conforms exactly to the shape of the other. Figures rise out of, and recede back into, ground, which is configurational and comprises all other available figures at once. For example, at a lecture, attention will shift from the speaker's words to his gestures, to the hum of the lights or to street sounds, to the feel of the chair or to a memory or association or smell. Each new figure in turn displaces the others into ground. Ground provides the structure or style of awareness, the 'way of seeing' as Flaubert called it, or the 'terms on which' a figure is perceived. The study of ground 'on its own terms' is virtually impossible; by definition it is at any moment environmental and subliminal. The only possible strategy for such study entails constructing an anti-environment: such is the normal activity of the artist, the only person in our culture whose whole business has been the retraining and updating of sensibility.

In the order of things, ground comes first and the figures emerge later. 'Coming events cast their shadows before them.' The ground of any technology or artefact is both the situation that gives rise to it and the whole environment (medium) of services and disservices that it brings into play. These environmental side-effects impose themselves willy-nilly as a new form of culture. 'The medium is the message.' Once the old ground becomes content of a new situation it appears to ordinary attention as aesthetic figure. At the same time a new retrieval or nostalgia is born. The business of the artist has been to report on the current status of ground by exploring those forms of sensibility made available by each new mode of culture long before the average man suspects that anything has changed. (*Laws of Media: The New Science*, p.5)

Alphabetic mystery

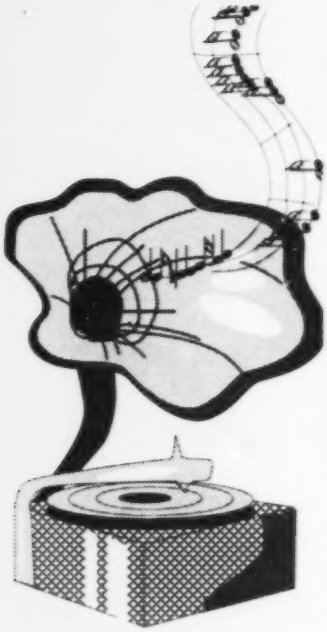
As Havelock has shown at length, the alphabet derives from the discovery of the consonant — an utter figment of the imagination. And this must be the central mystery of Western civilization: whatever possessed its inventors to imagine and invent the alphabet of phonemes?

The consonant does not exist alone; it is always accompanied by a vowel which it shapes or determines. On the other hand, because a syllable is a common experience, the syllable is a reasonable invention. But our letters are inherently meaningless; the sounds they represent are meaningless too: a double abstraction. In reading, a deliberate divorce is introduced between conscious and subconscious: some things are to be ignored, for example, individual letters. This may be the first example of an institutionalized subconscious. (OCTE, 1989)

Reading and "mental movies"

Reading aloud ended with the telegraph. The "trilling wire" or nerve system *outside* the body private and social drove readers to explore the inner landscape and to drop delivery to the outer audience. Reading speeds doubled or tripled, and the inner voice, silent for centuries (as Julian Jaynes reported) took over narration. The telegraph office was the box-office entrance to the movie theatre of the mind.

The familiar "mental movie" produced in us by a novel can only be produced by the high-speed passive reader: with delivery aloud, the reader faces the audience; silent, inner and outer coalesce. Film and stream-of-consciousness style were inevitable, both embedded in telegraph form. Similarly, all electric media push inwards, try to replace the alphabetic split of inner/outer and of conscious/subconscious by turning everything into phantasy. All turns inner. Tribal voices. (OCTE, 1989)



Musak and rational intelligence

Meditate a while on the muzaks. Here, at the peak of form of Western culture, as it were, we have sired a mode of music designed expressly to be ignored. And when ignored, to have a specific effect. Deliberate, *programmed* ignorance. If you pay attention to it, it ceases to work. Anything constantly repeated has the same effect: it becomes an object of inattention, a new program for the subconscious that turns the user into a robot. It simply and completely circumvents the intelligence and the conscious faculties, rendering them obsolescent. We retain only the dream of autonomy. So much for the "rational soul" and alphabetic man - and the illusion of detachment. The only possible strategy, then, for recovering control is too distasteful and too arduous for the average person. If you pay attention, study it, render it conscious, it can't work. The reason most ads have so little for the rational faculties is they're not for the rational faculties. Non-rational knowledge is mimetic and instantaneous, and instantly satisfying. Reading is too slow. (OCTE, 1989)

Post-literacy

Post-literacy is not the end of literacy but perhaps the onset of phase IV: following deciphering, manuscript culture, and the intense print phase. We are now well over the dividing line that was the 60s and 70s.

Post-literacy will bring with it a renaissance; the old thing comes back in a new form. Probably the most exquisite or most mannered writing is yet to come, something with the trembling delicacy of oriental dance or calligraphy.

Quite likely we will see a reorganization and stratification of skills. One part of the spectrum might feature literacy as simply utilitarian, without particular refinement, rather like typical bachelor cooking. Indeed, much "utility prose" is already at this ebb: read a few technical manuals or reports. No one reads - or writes - them for enjoyment or amusement. Two other plateaux are likely. One, the handicraft level, would see a facility with writing as a polite accomplishment, rather on a par with needlepoint or playing the violin - for private aesthetic satisfaction. The other plateau holds the literati in the best sense – a relatively small group, comparable perhaps to classical musicians, able to perform across the entire spectrum of literacy, versed in the Western tradition – an elite or aristocracy. They alone will have full rational powers of abstraction and detachment, will be able to control or suppress the voice of the inner robot. They will be in enormous demand because of their critical, logical and innovative skills, their ability to tap the left brain and suppress the right. They will probably not be the leaders - unless one or another turns pirate or entrepreneur. (OCTE, 1989)

The dyslexic: Every man as cubist

The present electronic age, in its inescapable evocation of simultaneity, presents the first serious threat to the 2500-year dominance of the left hemisphere. It is no surprise that students whose right brains have had eighteen years' education by TV have problems with left-brain curricula and SAT tests.

The current spate of dylexia and other reading difficulties — some 90 per cent of victims are males— is a direct result of TV and other electric media pressuring us into returning to the right hemisphere. Dyslexia is an inability to adopt a single, fixed point of view with respect to all letters and words: conversely, it consists of approaching letters and words from many points of view simultaneously (right-hemisphere fashion), minus the assumption that any one way is solely correct. As the pressure continues, so will the problems with our left-hemisphere alphabet. The cubists, as artists and 'antennae of the race,' detected the shift some seventy years ago, and explored the grammar of this sensory modality. If literacy is to survive for another generation in the West, our writing system will soon have to be completely recast in a mould congenial to right-hemisphere sensibility and satisfactions. We might, for example, replace it with a syllabary of fifty to seventy characters.
(*Laws of Media: The New Science*, p.76)

Teaching media: other perspectives

Marshall and Eric McLuhan collaborated with teacher Kathy Hutchon in 1978 to write a textbook that translated their theory into classroom practice. ***The City as Classroom*** *builds a program of media studies around training students to perceive and analyse their surroundings in terms of "figure," the elements we consciously note, and "ground," the elements of which we are not consciously aware. Besides devoting chapters to the traditional and new media — print, radio, television, computers, ... — they ask students to consider artefacts such as the automobile and the clock as media which shape our daily lives.*

The City as Classroom *is out of print. Eric McLuhan has given permission to* ***Media Focus*** *to reprint excerpts which provide the context for some of the exercises below. A few have been abridged from the original. If you can access a copy of this text in your library, you will discover a collection of hundreds of concrete and highly adaptable classrom ideas and exercises intended to be part of a full program but usable in many contexts.]* The numbers in brackets refers to the page in te original text. LS.

Figure/ground: a technique for seeing the whole situation

The terms *figure* and *ground*, in the sense that we are going to use them in this book, were first introduced ... about 1915. Strange as it may seem , until 1915 there had been no satisfactory terms in general use to describe the parts of a situation: people could only resort to talking about "this thing" and "that stuff", or to similar indefinite expressions. The terms "figure" and "foreground" and "background" were in use, but they were not fully satisfactory for the study of structure. For one thing, they already had quite specific meanings with reference to painting.

Scholars had observed that when a simple picture or image is looked at for a short while, some elements tend to advance into the foreground, often seem to detach themselves from the others and to stand out some distance from them. Quickly or gradually, these items in the foreground begin to monopolize the viewer's attention, while the rest are ignored: this is termed a *figure/ground* situation. The consciously noted elements are *figure*, and everything else is *ground*.

When we look at a bowl of flowers on a red tablecloth, we may be very conscious of the flowers (figure), but much less conscious of the tablecloth (ground), although that tablecloth influences the way we see the flowers: if the tablecloth were blue, for instance, the flowers would appear to be a slightly different color. But if a weaver were standing beside us, he or she might exclaim, "What a beautiful weave in that tablecloth !" (figure), and be relatively unconscious of the flowers (ground).

City as Classroom, p. 8-9.

80

In your own experience, *you* are always the *figure*, as long as you are conscious. The *ground* is always the setting in which you exist and act. The *ground* is never static; it is always changing. The interplay between you and this changing *ground* changes you. (Compare your picture in the Year Book last year with your picture this year.) (10)

Exercises

Figure and *ground* are usually associated with visual experience, but they are equally useful for noting and analyzing other kinds of situations, e.g. the area of sound.

Some *figure/ground* experiments that deal with the area of sound:

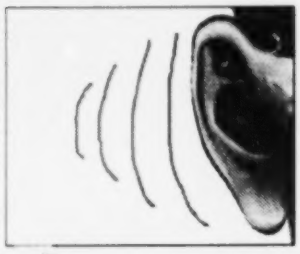
- Pick two locations of activity in your school — say the library and the cafeteria— and put them 'under surveillance.' Do some reconnaissance; then use a tape recorder to record all the normal sounds you hear. Edit down the sounds you have collected to a two-minute tape that creates the *effect* of the place through sound. Try to transmit the *feeling* of being there, not the impression of a 'trip through:' avoid story-line sequences

(figure) in order to concentrate on the *ground*. When you have played the tape, ask yourselves:

- How many sounds did the place make?
- What kind of sounds were they?
- Which sounds were remarkable (figure)?
- Which sounds were usual, normal, unremarkable (ground)?
- Are there any sounds you did not know you had, until you heard the tape?
- Are there any sounds which seemed uninteresting while you were recording, but which sound interesting on tape? Are there any uninteresting sounds on the tape, which seemed interesting in the place?
- Which sounds would tell a person from Poland or Mars most about the place?
- Which sounds need explaining? Why? To whom? Are they *figure* or *ground*?
- Look into the nature of "white noise" and its use in office buildings.
- Investigate the nature of background music and its use in a variety of places such as airplanes, dentists' offices and elevators.

In his book, *The World of Silence*, Max Picard explains how any sound must have silence as its *ground*. When the noise of the *ground*, or surround, itself becomes noticeable, the *figures* of sound tend to be obliterated. Conversation waits until a jet has passed.

- When environmental noise increases to the point of becoming *figure*, does noise pollution begin ? (12-13)



The personality structure of each individual forms part of an invisible ground which changes the way he or she experiences the same *figure*. A *ground* may be "hidden," because it has become so familiar to us that we have stopped paying it any conscious attention.

Exercise: Reflection on changing culture

- Put a Toulouse-Lautrec poster beside the road. Drive by at 10 km/h. Can you read the poster ? Drive by again at 80 km/h. Can you see it ?
- What information have you discovered from this experiment about the *ground* of nineteenth-century France ?
- What have you discovered about the *ground* of twentieth-century North America ?
- Is there a difference between town and country billboards? Are city billboards supposed to attract conscious attention ? Are they *figures* or part of our barely noticed, urban ground ? (18-19)

One sure way to perceive the structure of any situation easily is to reverse its figure/ground relationship. If you do this, even the most hidden grounds and relationships will come to light.

Exercise:

To discover the structure of a talk show, arrange to put one on. Invite strangers in to host the show and ask class members to be guests. What happens? What does this exercise tell you about the structure of a talk show? (20)

There is no logical connection between figure and ground, but there is always a relationship, since ground always provides the terms on which a figure is experienced. In that relationship, meaning (the effect on you) is generated. (p.21)

Exercises: Figure/ground in advertising

Figure/ground analysis provides a useful method of finding meaning in advertising.

- What effect is produced by draping a beautiful woman over an expensive car in an advertisement to sell a car ? Is the car figure, or is the woman? Bring to class a variety of ads to demonstrate the effect created by placing a figure against a particular ground. The class might want to work in teams and each could collect perfume ads, or liquor ads, or car ads, and make a presentation to the class on the way each group of products is sold. One team could use well-known television commercials for a particular kind of product.

Recheck your ads to see whether the product which is the ad's presumed figure is really the sales-object, or whether some element in the presumed ground attracts more conscious attention. The more outstanding element is the real figure and the real sales-object. (27-28)

A stereotype is a figure repeated so often in a culture that it ceases to be noticed and becomes part of the unconscious ground of that culture, shaping people's perceptions subliminally. (28)

Exercise:

Begin your investigation of any medium by making a list of all its forms. Then choose one item from your list and experiment with it to get a deeper understanding of its characteristics. (32)

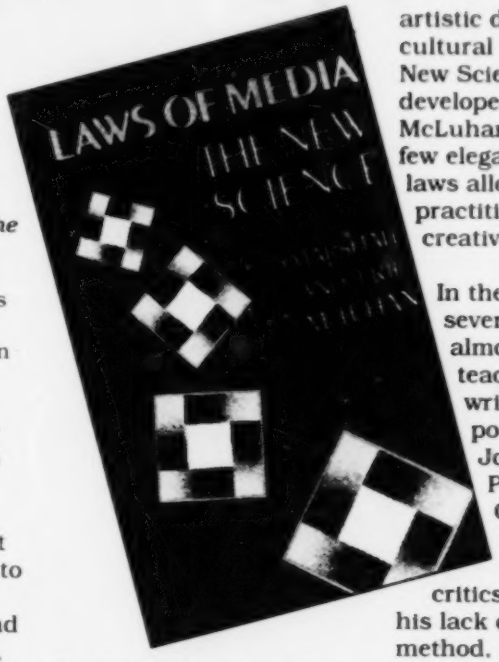
City as Classroom: Understanding Languages and Media.
McLuhan, Hutchon, McLuhan

Review I

Cultural literacy and laws of media

review of *Laws of Media:The New Science*. by Marshall and Eric McLuhan. University of Toronto Press 1988. 252 pages.
reviewed by Max Ackerman

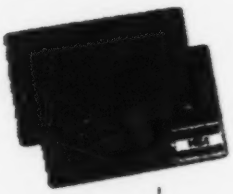
Various research institutes and advocacy groups are beginning to call for a 'big picture' approach to literacy. This requires a coherent vision of what it means to be literate in the arts, sciences, humanities and technologies. The book, *Laws of Media: The New Science* by Marshall and



Eric McLuhan shows how to integrate the technological, social, and artistic disciplines for cultural awareness. The New Science as developed by the McLuhans provides a few elegantly simple laws allowing practitioners to become creative explorers.

In the early seventies, after almost fifty years of teaching and writing about the poetic methods of Joyce, Eliot, Pound, Coleridge, and others, and in response to critics who derided his lack of scientific method, Marshall McLuhan wondered if he could find a poetic method of discovery. In collaboration with his son Eric, McLuhan began an exhaustive decade-long search for the transformational principles of media. What they found and how they applied it, is told in *Laws of Media* (U of T, 88) and the journal *McLuhan Studies*.
In *Laws of Media*, the authors demonstrate how technology influences our sensory awareness of space and time, even at the neurological level. They criticize current theories of communication for ignoring the role of artefacts in our sensory lives. Shakespeare understood, "No profit is where no pleasure is taken." To heighten our

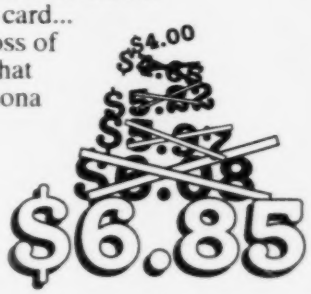
Meaning of 'credit card' using tetrad (version 1)



with the credit card, the public is poured into the computer, as information

image of user

you need another card to validate your card... loss of card is loss of identity: requires that you make a new persona



barter – inflation

Enhances	Reverses
Retrieves	Obsolesces

corporate services
awareness
audience
credit card as stage

computer as tribal memory bank

money

user, transaction, and goods alike are obsolesced and become information and imagery

powers of observation and imagination, the McLuhans developed a model of inquiry, in the form of four questions, which they call tetrads. The questions are:

1) **What does this enhance, amplify or intensify?**

2) **What does it displace or render obsolete?**

3) **What does it retrieve which was previously displaced?**

4) **What does it reverse into?**

Tetradic analysis can be applied to any forms: cultural, political, mechanical. The book provides dozens of examples of the application of the tetrad, ranging from "airplane" and "brothel" to "hermeneutics" and "Romanticism" (see two versions of credit card below). Cast in the role of an investigators, readers search primarily their own experience: beliefs, feelings, cognitions, and behaviors for effects or clues to reveal the mystery of some artefact. The McLuhans define artefacts as clusters or configurations of media as experienced by their user. The answer to the four questions comprise the meaning of a particular artefact.

The McLuhans discovered that thinking tetradically is thinking analogically: Enhancement is to Reversal as Retrieval is to Obsolescence. To show the laws forming Gestalt, they can be juxtaposed and read left-to-right; bottom-to-top, etc. For example, the personal computer enhances ease of composing vernacular prose as it reverses into arduous do-your-own-typing it displaces the studied, linear, draft-oriented approach to writing as it retrieves the creative streak and improvisation. The conventional analysis looks into the content of a computer and finds only an electronic device for storing and retrieving digital codes.

After centuries of confusing literate man with grammatical man, the new science of media poetics as elaborated in this book, shows how literacy in a field demands nothing less than understanding its full cultural consequences.

Max Ackerman teaches Communications at Dawson College. He has been studying McLuhan since the 1960s.

Meaning of 'credit card' using tetrad (version 2)

masks that money can buy

the corporate image

great danger is loss of face

the creditor as cop

private imagery | **bankruptcy**

Enhances | **Reverses**

Retrieves | **Obsolesces**

barter, haggle | **money, the body**

nothing fixed beforehand: the identities are as fluid as the haggle

the breakdown of hardware

gain hunting: occupation of the rich

Review II

L'éducation aux médias dans le monde: nouvelles orientations. ed. C. Bazelgette, E. Berort, J. Saveno. BFI/CLEMI, Paris, 1992. 256 pp.
reviewed by Michel Pichette

This book is a report of "Les nouvelles orientations de l'éducation aux médias dans le monde," an international conference organized in Toulouse, France in 1990 by the British Film Institute and le Centre de liaison de l'enseignement et des moyens d'information (CLEMI, FRANCE) under the auspices of the Conseil de l'Europe and UNESCO.

A collection of works by students, researchers, media professionals and community project directors, the report is the outcome of the meeting of delegates from more than 45 countries. It is rich in its attention to ethno-cultural similarities and differences in relation to television, media literacy and the ways in which children and their parents interact with the media.

In addition, the report includes a number of practical classroom ideas on subjects including photography, journalism, media education theory and production.

This publication stresses the importance of both the practical and theoretical aspects of media education and provides a valuable overview of the status of this area of learning in a number of countries, including Chili, India, Russia, Japan, the United States and Denmark. It reports on the history, pedagogy, resources and methods of evaluation in media education in these countries, making it a goldmine of information and experience.

Michel Pichette is with Les services aux collectivités, Université du Québec à Montréal. He researches and writes on media education and attends international meetings.

The report is available in French at The Centre for Literacy.

International Declaration on Media Education 1993

[Michel Pichette of the Service aux collectivitées, Université du Québec à Montreal, was an invited speaker at a conference organized by l'Institut international de la communication visuelle (IICV) held in Chaumont-Neuchâtal, Switzerland in April 1993. The theme of the conference was "The Role of Media Education in the School Curriculum." He reports on a declaration on media education adopted there.]

Two hundred delegates representing a number of member countries of the Conseil de l'Europe met in Switzerland in April 1993 to adopt the text of a declaration concerning media education. This document outlines objectives and strategies for media education curricula at the primary and secondary levels, as well as for teacher-training programs. The theme of this international conference followed recommendations from an 1989 meeting of the Conseil de l'Europe's conférence permanente des ministres européans de l'éducation held in Istambul.

The Declaration adopted at the Chaumont-Neuchâtel conference has since been submitted to the Conseil de l'Europe and to ministries of education of representative countries. It stipulates that media education must be included at all levels of education, whether it be as a separate course or integrated across the curriculum, and stresses the necessity to begin at the initial levels of learning.

While the media create their own forms of language and ways of thinking which borrow from the written word, the Declaration affirms the critical need for a "new literacy."

Delegates recognized that media education

1) is integral to the effective and cognitive development of young people;

2) encourages learning new means of expression and communication through the media; and

3) is one way in which schools can respond to the new challenges of contemporary society and post-modern culture.

The Declaration and a report of the conference are available in French at The Centre for Literacy.

WINTER 1994 Vol. 9 No. 4

Literacy across the curriculum

including Medi Focus

Connecting literacy in the schools, community and workplace

New technologies in education: Who will teach the teachers?

New technologies have not yet revolutionized the classroom as many believed that they would a decade ago, and humanists are not involved in any organized way in the design of the new information highway. These were claims made in two presentations at the 1993 conference of the Modern Language Association (MLA) by Cynthia Selfe, an English professor at Michigan Technological University, who has been a pioneer researcher and promoter of computers in composition.

Selfe analyzed the impact of technology on teaching and suggested new directions for teacher training if the technologies are ever going to serve the goals of humane education. Her remarks were addressed to English teachers, but apply across the disciplines.

Ten years ago, educators had utopian visions for technology. They predicted that computers would support increasingly democratic work spaces; that they would involve more students,

including those who did not respond to traditional learning; that they would encourage classroom equity.

Few of these hopes have been fulfilled, according to Selfe. Computers have simply perpetuated the inequities that were already in the system. For example, at least two studies have revealed that computers are used most innovatively in schools with middle and upper middle-class children, whereas in schools with a predominantly poorer population, computers are used primarily for drill and practice.

On the technical side, computer interfaces reflect the values of our culture both explicitly and implicitly. Selfe noted the icons on a Macintosh screen, all drawn from a corporate culture of white collar workers — manila folders, files, documents. Nowhere do we see a workbench or a kitchen counter.

Ideologically, Selfe points out the privileged position of English in the world of computers. Most word

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The Centre for Literacy Montreal, Quebec

Literacy Across the Curriculum

The Centre for Literacy
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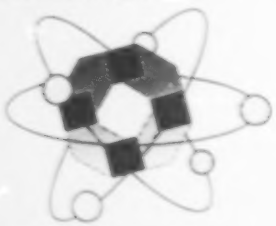
The Centre for Literacy Le Centre d'Alphabétisation is a resource centre and teacher-training project designed to provide training, research, and information services which promote and link the advancement of literacy in the schools, the workplace and the community. The Centre gratefully acknowledges the support of the National Literacy Secretariat, Human Resources & Labour Canada and Dawson College.
President: David W. Perks



Literacy for the 21st century
Literacy encompasses a complex set of abilities to understand and use the dominant symbol systems of a culture for personal and community development. In a technological society, the concept of literacy is expanding to include the media and electronic text, in addition to alphabetic and number systems. These abilities vary in different social and cultural contexts according to need and demand. Individuals must be given life-long learning opportunities to move along a continuum that includes the reading and writing, critical understanding, and decision-making abilities they need in their community.

continued from page 1

processors in the U.S. are English-only, and even ASCII, the basic means of translating from IBM to Macintosh, does not adequately support languages other than English or cultures other than American (e.g. there is no £ sign).

Training teachers in computers and change

Most college-level teachers in North America, claims Selfe, do not feel prepared to instruct in a computerized environment, and teacher training is not preparing new teachers for the technical innovation expected in the next decade. The problem, she believes, is that most teacher education programs misfocus on the technology itself, and try to make English teachers into technicians who can program languages or manage computer environments.

They do not teach them how to think critically about when and how virtual space (inside the computer's memory) can be used constructively.

Selfe makes five suggestions for training current English teachers and for educating the next generation of teachers:

1) Prepare English teachers to become lifelong learners of new technologies.
This means understanding the multi-layered nature of literacy extending from the grammar of the page all the way to the grammar of the computer network. For current teachers, Selfe compares the process to second-language learning. We may never become absolutely fluent; but for our students, it may be one of their first languages.

2) Prepare English teachers to see technology critically.

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BOX

English teachers as technology critics

If we hope to create computer-based environments that will help us change oppressive literacy practices, we have to think critically about what kinds of learning we want to go in electronic spaces: how these literacy practices are articulated with other social, political, ideological forces; and how we can design electronic learning spaces to support literacy activities that resist, even in small, partial, and momentary ways, continued patterns of oppression and inequity. Practically, this means that technology studies, especially technology criticism, needs to become a part of the education of every English teacher, whether in schools or colleges. It means, as well, that we must involve ourselves with software and hardware design, lobby manufacturers and publishers, sponsor awards for promising packages and environments, insist that English teachers have a role in shaping projects like NREN, and take advantage of the occasions that the new technologies provide us for thinking about our responsibilities as educators, not just about how they affect our vision of literary studies.

Cynthia Selfe (Michigan Technological University), "Politicizing and Inhabiting Virtual Landscapes as Educational Spaces," presentation at the Modern Language Association (MLA) 1993, in a forum titled *Reconfiguring the Discipline in an Electronic Age* Toronto, December 28, 1993.

1 On memory and medieval literacy

The strong oral component of medieval popular literacy meant that "the masses of people read by means of the ear rather than the eye, by hearing others read or recite rather than by reading to themselves" (Crosby 88) — those who could decipher print mediated writing to the *illitterati*. The use of memory, the persistent habit of reading aloud, and the preference, even among the educated, for listening to a statement rather than scrutinizing it in script comprised popular literacy practices. Diversifications and diffusions of elitist literacy practices existed among the laity to the extent that people at all levels of expertise with texts functioned according to an awareness of key cultural texts, be they religious or legal. Thus it was that both lay men and women alike heard about texts they probably had not read, listened to texts they perhaps could not read, composed texts they probably could not themselves write, and talked about texts they all had in some measure committed to memory. Theirs was a literacy based on texts (text-based) rather than dependent on texts (text-dependent) as is the case with our modern documentary literacies. Thus, when we consider medieval literacy practices, we must look beyond those hushed, secluded, privileged, and sometimes solitary documentary practices of the academy that Robert Pattison calls "the formal literacy of power" (76). We must render visible those less familiar, oral-aural social events outside the academy, the "vernacular literacy of daily life" (76), that created textual communities of shared understanding and communal performances contingent on the art of memory.

Cheryl Glenn, "Medieval Literacy Outside the Academy: Popular Practice and Individual Technique" *College Composition and Communication*, Vol. 44, No. 4, Dec. 1993, p. 498.

2 On book madness

The literature of bibliomania is largely nineteenth-century. Books mattered then more than they do today: it was a time when books were worn apart simply by being read so many times. Today we worry about people who watch seven hours of television a day; then, bibliomania was a popular term and a subject of concern. It had an aura of madness. "He who is affected by this mania knows books only by their titles and dates, and is rather seduced by the exterior than the interior," a French scholar is quoted as saying in the Reverend Dibdin's *Bibliomania*. Gustave Flaubert was drawn to the subject. In 1836, when he was in his teens, he wrote a short story called "Bibliomania," about Giacomo, a mad Spaniard who would kill for a book. "It was not learning that he loved, it was its expression," Flaubert wrote. "He loved a book because it was a book; he loved its odor, its form, its title."
Philip Weiss, "The Book Thief," *Harper's Magazine*, January 1994, p. 46.

3 Reading verboten

From a memo written May 25, 1940 by Heinrich Himmler, Nazi Minister:

"For the non-German population of the East, there must be no school higher than the fourth grades of elementary school.
The sole goal of this schooling is to teach them simple arithmetic, writing one's own name, and the doctrine that it is divine law to obey the Germans. I do not think that reading is desirable."

— Quotation displayed at The Holocaust Museum, Washington, D.C.

Layers of language: Teaching spelling/decoding to adult literacy and learning-disabled students

Learning about word roots and origins can help adult literacy and learning-disabled students decode and spell longer words and become better readers, according to Marcia Henry, Director of The Center for Educational Research on Dyslexia, at San Jose State University (CA). Professor Henry is distressed when she visits adult literacy classes and sees students being taught children's sentences; it ignores adult intelligence, she says, to be reading "The fat cat sat on the mat."

Henry supports the philosophy of whole language and recognizes the value of phonics in a limited context; however, she has found that neither whole language nor phonics-based reading programs teach learning-disabled or adult literacy students the kind of language lessons that can make them strong, competent readers. In contrast, she has developed teaching strategies around word roots and origins that can achieve that goal.

Henry demonstrates these strategies with two diagrams [see following graphics.]
Some ways to apply English word origins to teaching spelling and reading include pointing out how each of the three main origins influences word formation. At the Anglo-Saxon level, we compound two and affix pre- and suffixes. The Latin influence accounts for strong roots that affix only in order to make new and related words. With the Greek, we are back to combining, this time two forms with equal stress.

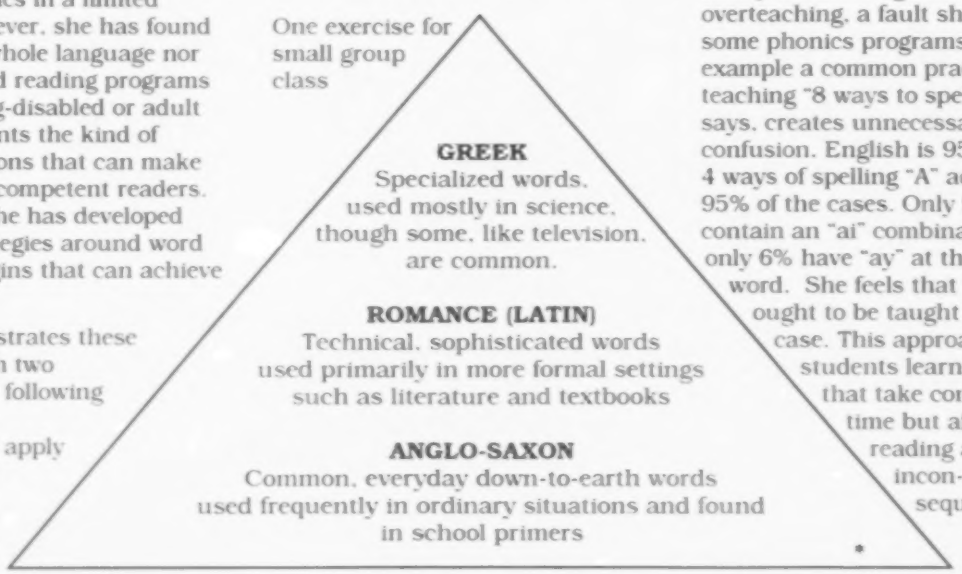
This kind of language knowledge, Henry has found, helps students make sense of large numbers of words they could not have read or understood before. She reinforces this through exercises and games.

One exercise for small group class discussion is to write a strong root on the board, then ask students to keep adding pre- and suffixes to create related words. The teacher can point out language features, i.e. that suffixes do not have such fixed meanings as prefixes, but do change grammatical meaning.

EX:	struc		
	struc-	ture	(point out that
de-	struc-	tion	"ture" "tion" "tor"
con-	struc-	tion	indicate noun)
con-	struc-	tor	
con-	struct-	ed	(point out that "ed"
con-	struct-	ing	indicates verb/past
etc			tense)

Henry cautions against overteaching, a fault she finds with some phonics programs. For example a common practice of teaching "8 ways to spell 'A'," she says, creates unnecessary confusion. English is 95% regular; 4 ways of spelling "A" account for 95% of the cases. Only 9% of words contain an "ai" combination, and only 6% have "ay" at the end of a word. She feels that "they" ought to be taught as a special case. This approach saves students learning "rules" that take considerable time but affect their reading and spelling inconsequentially.

Some ways to apply English word origins to teaching


GREEK
Specialized words, used mostly in science, though some, like television, are common.
ROMANCE (LATIN)
Technical, sophisticated words used primarily in more formal settings such as literature and textbooks
ANGLO-SAXON
Common, everyday down-to-earth words used frequently in ordinary situations and found in school primers

The triangle illustrates the "polyglot" nature of English — 94% of English words originate from Anglo-Saxon, Latin, or Greek, with more than 60% from Latin and Greek. Our most common everyday words — the ones taught first in schools and in adult literacy — come from the Anglo-Saxon. About 100 of these words account for 60-65% of what we read in our daily lives. They happen to be among the least regular and least phonetically-based words in English. Almost all the words that provide the content and context for disciplines such as math, science, social science, come from the Latin and Greek.

	LETTER-SOUND CORRESPONDENCES	SYLLABLE PATTERNS	MORPHEME PATTERNS
ANGLO-SAXON	**Consonants** mad step that **Vowels** pin/pine part coin	rabbit silver hobo cabin turtle poem	hardware railroad like get unlike forget unlikely forgetting
LATIN	(schwa) direction spatial excellent	inter- intra -ity	construction erupting conductor
GREEK	phonograph scholar sympathy	hyper micro	microscope chloroplast physiology *

* Word Origin by Pattern Matrix — Framework for Curriculum and Instruction, Henry 1988. Used with permission.

The rectangle illustrates the three main origins of English and the three primary means of teaching decoding and spelling. While letter-sound correspondence works mainly with one-syllable words or with single syllables in a longer word, it is the dominant means of teaching learning-disabled and literacy students. Phonics provides a key to only about 600 - 700 English words. Yet because so many reading teachers believe that these students must master the first level before moving on, many students never get to the level of reading words that could open the doors to advanced learning.

Research has shown that fluent readers who cannot figure out the meaning of a word from the context do *not* use letter-sound correspondence, but start with morpheme (or meaning) patterns — that is, they look for familiar roots, prefixes and suffixes. Henry argues that the most effective strategy for teaching learning-disabled and literacy students is to start at two levels simultaneously, the monosyllabic letter-sound correspondence, where applicable, and the multisyllabic syllable and morpheme patterns.

Henry has prepared a two-page list of the most common Latin and Greek roots in English, expanding on work done more than thirty years ago by Professor James Brown who picked out 14 roots that can account for over 100,000 English words. Henry has written several teaching texts for l.d. and literacy students with background and classroom exercises, many in the form of word games.

Marcia Henry presented at the International Reading Association's Third Conference on Adolescent and Adult Literacy on February 5 in Washington, D.C. Her books for teachers and students, WORDS and TUTORS, 1,2, &3 are available from LEX PRESS, P.O. Box 859, Los Gatos, CA 95031.

BOX

Some general advice on teaching decoding/spelling:

- Think about what is and is not productive to teach.
- Teach the key aspects of phonics — consonant sounds, blends, short/long vowels patterns, etc.
- Be careful not to claim "rules" which are not rules. English is 95% regular and not as much a language of exceptions as many phonics specialists claim.
- Spend some time (not a great deal) on syllable patterns —i.e. it is important to know that every syllable has a vowel and consonant(s); the "schwa" (vowel that is neither long nor short) should be introduced.
- Put most emphasis on the third column— origins and roots. It is the one that will provide readers with access to the largest body of knowledge, and it recognizes where most adults are intellectually.

Student writing contest

Since 1986, The Centre for Literacy, Dawson College, and The Gazette have sponsored a student contest on writing editorial opinions. Open to full-time Quebec college students, and since last year to Grade 11 high school students, the contest has involved an increasing number of students writing across the curriculum.

The 1993 contest set several precedents. All three winners came from one institution, Marianopolis College, and there was a tie for first, with first and second prize split equally between Anthony Moschopoulos and Hannah Williams. Third prize went to Alana Hirsh.

The judging process

When an entry was received, it was coded, listed in the computer with the information from the entry form, and stripped of all identification. Each page was number coded to insure that no pages were lost. Every paper was read independently by three readers and rated:
A (potential winner),
B (well-written/not a winner), or
C (eliminate).
The three readers sent their assessments back to The Centre for Literacy where results were tabulated. A paper that received even one "A" was pulled out for the final judging. The three final judges read all the "A"s again and picked a group of the best which were reread closely, applying the criteria that had been circulated to guide the writers.

Participation from high schools rose in 1994. Although no high school student was among the top six entries, there were ten among the group of 35 read by the final judges. These ten came from Chambly County High School (1), Dorval (2), Kell's Academy (1), Sacred Heart (2), and Herzliah St. Laurent (4).

Photos: The Gazette, Richard Arless Jr.

A student perspective on family in the 1990s

by Hannah Williams

Because 1994 is International Year of the Family and the literacy community has been emphasizing family literacy, one of the winning articles is especially relevant and is reprinted below.

Somewhere between the twenty-something crowd and the Nintendo generation, today's 15 to 19-year-olds combine a Machiavellian approach to education and the job market, with Guatemalan ponchos and platform shoes. And we are definitely in the know.

We know what goes in the Blue Bin and what doesn't. We know about global poverty and hunger. We understand how slash-and-burn logging in Nicaragua affects the atmosphere over Canada. We know what aquired immune deficiency syndrome is, and by ninth grade, we can all put a condom on a banana correctly.

Society has come to the conclusion, rightly or wrongly, that information is the key to success. Canadians strive to become "educated consumers" and "informed citizens," this responding to the demands of this decade.

One demand which remains unanswered is the task of building strong families (of any kind) in the nineties. If the Canadian family is doomed, as some experts predict, then it will ironically be our "info-culture" which has directly led to its extinction. It is not so much a lack of information which will handicap our poncho-sporting future parents, but a lack of the right kind of information.

It is no longer possible to assume that young people will simply absorb from their environment the tools needed to build a striving community. In fact, the messages we receive about the family from the media and from our role models are at best unrealistic and at worst aggressively anti-family. To serve the needs of the family of the nineties, society must begin by transforming these messages.

The T.V. Guide from November 6 (1993) lists at least a dozen shows about families. On the one hand are programs like *Family Matters* and *Fresh Prince*: gentle comedies in the tradition of *The Cosby Show*. Often funny, but not particularly thoughtful, these are the Hollywood families. The personalities are easily identified: overbearing but well-meaning fathers, protective mothers, daughters who shop and worry about the opposite sex, and sons who play basketball and worry about the opposite sex. While this makes for good comedy, it provides only a simplistic sketch of the concerns and diversity of today's families.

On the other hand, there are shows like *The Simpsons*, television's most blissfully dysfunctional family. Blatantly cynical, Bart and company draw rave reviews from their mostly teenaged audience. For fans, "this is what families are really like." While *The Simpsons* may indeed be closer to the truth than the picture-perfect inhabitants of Hollywood's sitcoms, their version of family life is alarmingly skewed.

Most disturbing, however, are the made-for-television movies which run

on Prime Time. The same slot on November 7 ran two dramas on the family. The first, [is] a story of a woman who "embarks on a personal mission to avenge her son's murder and gain custody of her grandchild," the second about a woman "driven to murder after suffering years of abuse from her common-law husband." The families here are violent, anguished, desperate. Dramas like these – many are based on fact – acccentuate the relentless news reports of physical, emotional and sexual abuse of children by their parents, and of spouses by their spouses.

In fact, tuning into the nightly news can be deeply demoralizing: Quebec's divorce rate was 46.6% in 1988, one in four Montreal children do not have their basic needs met, less than half of Quebecois men and women are married by the age of fifty. These statistics, so faithfully reported, focus on detail, but ignore the substance. Rather than mapping changing definitions and values, we arc counting single-parent households and falling birthrates.

These messages about the family would not be so demeaning if young people could turn to figures of authority and see working models of stable and loving families. This doesn't necessarily mean the traditional mother-father-child unit, but simply a combination of adult and dependant who have made a commitment to each other. Instead, society gives us individual role models: men and women who have succeeded as "me's" rather than as "we's." We are taught to love ourselves, know ourselves, and be true to ourselves. Aside from being a near impossible task, the focus is drawn away from the person as part of a community, a unit within other units. The relationship with the self takes priority over the relationship with the other.

Faced with the negative and contradictory images in the media and the emphasis on navel-gazing as the path to fulfillment, it is no wonder that the Canadian family is reeling under the attack.

It's reassuring to note that our society remains committed to the ideal of family: polls show that it is more important to us than anything else in our lives. Now comes the attempt to make this ideal a reality, and the right kind of information will help.

The right kind of information is positive: it includes encouraging students not only to look ahead to their career paths, but also to their hopes and expectations for home life. It also includes parents talking to their children about family decisions but not only regarding curfews and allowance.

The right kind of information is practical. This does not mean another lecture on birth control, it means working on interpersonal skills like respect and honesty, and emphasizing shared responsability. Knowing and understanding that families are partnerships, that require effort from each individual, is fundamental.

Most of my peers envision a future which includes a family, although out idea of this family varies widely. Whatever definition we choose, the information we receive now will be a crucial factor in how we raise the families of the nineties. Our great talent is using information to change our lifestyles: to recycle, the boycott Central American beef, to practive safe sex. If we have the knowledge we need, maybe we can start rebuilding the Canadian family.

LPQ

Literacy Partners of Quebec (LPQ) presented a full day Family Fun Fair on February 13, 1994. This was a day of activities for 140

adult basic education students, their adult family members and children, aged 3 months to 17 years.

Literacy in its simplest and most complex forms was at the heart of participatory events in storytelling,

reading, music, art, theatre, video cameras, computers and games. The names of the games were fun, joy, and delight.

From this day, LPQ is planning to initiate some family literacy learning projects during 1994, International Year of the Family.

Full report – Spring 1994 issue

The Centre for Literacy

How to Plan and Implement a Quality Family Literacy/ Learning Program

A Workshop

Presenter: Meta Potts
National Center for Family Literacy
Louisville, Kentucky

May 13, 1994

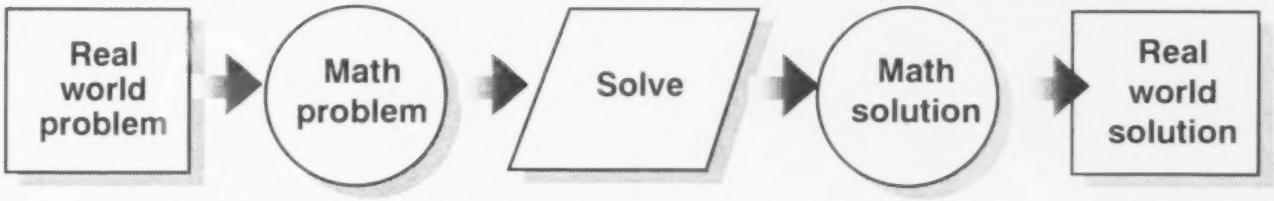
Numeracy = mathematical literacy

by Brian Smith, Dawson College

Numeracy implies proficiency in using and manipulating numbers and symbols; but it also requires a communication skill — the ability to express oneself in numerate terms. While it is true that mathematics is a language, it is equally true that the language of mathematics does not exist in a vacuum: if we cannot, at the beginning of the process, convert our queries into mathematical terms, and at the end of it, convert the mathematical answer back into common language, then the entire endeavor is a failure.

Making math interesting

It is here, in the ability to express "real world" problems in mathematical terms, and to express numeric answers in the language of everyday life, that much work has to be done in mathematical pedagogy.



Too often, the mathematics instructor, at every level, from elementary school through university through adult ed, accepts the correct numerical answer as the end of the process. Too much of mathematics concerns itself with the numerical solution to a numerical problem

$$\frac{1}{4} \times \frac{2}{3} = \frac{1}{6}$$

This is a very interesting mathematical statement (if you are a very interested mathematician) but it likely to mean very little to a nine-year-old unless it is given a context:

You go and buy a pizza with a friend. The pizza costs $3. You have $2 and your friend has only $1 so you get two thirds of the pizza to bring home. When you get home your mother insists that you share the pizza with three sisters. How much of the pizza do you get?

Of course the answer is that you each get one quarter of two thirds of a pizza, or, in mathematical terms: $\frac{1}{6}$
Same mathematical problem as before, but this time it means something!

This is an important principle. In order to engender enthusiasm it is essential to make the numbers interesting – they have to come to life.

This is one of the best arguments for the early introduction of statistics in the mathematical curriculum. Statistics works with data, not "pure" numbers. Data are numbers with context. Finding the average amount of money spent by students on movies in a month, the amount of variation in the blood pressure of a group of mathematics teachers, the total amount of money owed to a corporation, the average amount of profit earned by shareholders – these are examples of real world numerical data which can provide a motivational stimulus for students. If the problem is interesting enough and if the student wants to know the answer badly enough, she will find a way to get it!

New technology and math

We are at a major turning point in education in general and mathematics education in particular. Recent advances in computational technology relieve us of the burden of lengthy and time-consuming computation; with the obvious necessity to guard against laziness and the loss of basic skills, we are in a position to perform in seconds calculations which, only a few years ago, would have taken days or, worse still, been abandoned.

"The mathematics instructor who refuses to use a graphing calculator or computer is like a doctor who eschews modern technology and refuses to order a magnetic resonance image (MRI) of your brain because they didn't have those newfangled gadgets when he graduated from medical school back in 1957."

Graphing technology on computers and hand-held calculators is rapidly becoming accessible to all; with this advance we can shift the focus of problem-solving from the numerical to the visual domain. Graphing technology is not merely a technical development which allows us to graph more rapidly: it is a major break-through which gives us a new medium for exploration and discovery.

The gradual erosion of geometrical visualization and problem-solving has led to a generation of mathematics students who are spatially illiterate, who do not understand the language of geometrical reasoning. The rigour of proving Euclidean propositions has been done away with and has left the student bereft of any intuitive grasp of geometry in 2 or 3 dimensional space, let alone a relativistic 4 dimensional continuum.

Graphing calculators, used appropriately, have put geometry back within our grasp. The mathematics instructor who refuses to use a graphing calculator or computer is like a doctor who eschews modern technology and refuses to order a magnetic resonance image (MRI) of your brain because they didn't have those newfangled gadgets when he graduated from medical school back in 1957.

Advances in educational theories of memory and cognition must also be brought to bear on the problem of how best to educate our students. The challenge facing mathematics educators is how to prepare our students for survival in the 21st century. We need to use all of the considerable resources at our disposal, from the abacus to the super-computer, from the geometrical blocks of the kindergarten to the 3-dimensional images on the computer screen. Above all we need imagination and foresight, and the enthusiasm to kindle the spirit of mathematical exploration in our students.

Brian Smith teaches mathematics at Dawson College and McGill University. He is active in AMATYC, The Association of Mathematics Teachers in Two-Year Colleges.

Brian Smith presented a workshop on numeracy on February 10, 1994. Classroom ideas from that session will appear in the Spring 1994 issue of *LAC*.

Report on Canada-wide Math Test released December 16, 1993

The report on the first national mathematics test was released by the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada. In April 1993, approximately 50,000 13 and 16-year-old students from across the country wrote the mathematics assessment as part of the School Achievement Indicators Program (SAIP).

The assessment tested students' achievement in mathematics content and problem-solving. Results are reported according to five levels af achievement. Major findings include:

- Approximately 64% of 13-year-olds perform at level 2 or above in mathematics content.
- Approximately 60% of 16-year-olds are achieving at level 3 or above in mathematics content.
- Approximately 56% of 13-year-olds perform at level 2 or above in problem-solving, and about 24% of 16-year-olds perform at level 3 or above.
- There is evidence of a clear gain in achievement of 16-year-olds over that of 13-year-olds; this is equally true for boys and girls and in all parts of the country, for both mathematics content and problem-solving.
- Slightly more boys than girls reach levels 4 and 5 by age 16 for math content and problem-solving.

"The results for problem-solving will lead ministers to question the emphasis placed on this aspect of mathematics in the curriculum, in teaching strategies and in student assessment," said Quebec's Minister of Education and Science. "In that way, the SAIP will achieve its original objective, which is to provide those responsible for education with information that will help to improve student learning."

A detailed technical report will be made available to each province and territory in February 1994 to enable a more in-depth analysis of student performance in each aspect of mathematics.

The report on the SAIP mathematics assessment is the first in a series. A report will be issued in the fall of 1994 on reading and writing assessment, and it is expected that a report on science assessment will be issued in the fall of 1996.

Information: Ms. Monique Bélanger, CMEC, (416) 964-2551, ext. 233

Literacy conference highlights numeracy

The International Reading Association (IRA) Conference on Adolescent and Adult Literacy in Washington on February 4 - 6, devoted a full afternoon session to Enhancing Numeracy Skills in Literacy Programs: Challenges and New Directions. [See BOX] Several research projects were presented with conclusions and recommendations for program and curriculum planners. The National Center on Adult Literacy at University of Pennsylvania has produced a study on numeracy and adult literacy, and the Massachusetts ABE Math Team has carried out a project applying the mathematical standards suggested by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics to adult basic education programs in their state. The Center for Literacy in Philadelphia has produced a document by ABE about their math learning, what helps them, what hinders them and some games they have developed.

Copies of the reports are available by contacting: Iddo Gal, National Center on Adult Literacy, University of Pennsylvania, 3910 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104-3111, Tel: (215) 898-2100; Fax: (251) 898-9804.

William Arcand, SABES Coordinator, Co-director Massachusetts ABE Math Team, Holyoke Community College, 303 Homestead Avenue, Holyoke, MA 01040, Tel: (413) 538-7000 ext. 586.

Rose Brandt, Center for Literacy, 636 S. 48th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19143.

BOX

Rationale: Why discuss NUMERACY at a conference on LITERACY?

- Mathematical tasks/ideas are common in everyday and work life.
- Many everyday or work tasks integrate mathematical and language elements.
- Mathematical knowledge helps in "reading the world." "Literacy...in all of its manifestations..[including mathematics]..provides a common fabric of communication indispensable for modern civilized life.. Mathematics is the language of science and technology..." *Everybody counts*, National Research Council 1989
- Language plays a role in learning mathematics. [See In the Classroom: pp. 8-9]

The resources in the Centre for Literacy

are catalogued and may be borrowed in person or by mail (postage covered by the borrower). Documents can be consulted in The Centre from Monday – Friday, 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

In addition to the materials listed inthe catalogue, we have directories of program and services, bibliographies on many subjects, international periodicals and newsletters, catalogues of learning materials, tapes/videos, and boxes of newspaper/magazine clippings.

We are connected to the National Adult Literacy Database and INTERNET.

Printouts on specific subject headings can be requested at cost. Information: Catherine Duncan (514) 931-8731, local 1415. cduncan@dawsoncollege.qc.ca.

Numeracy

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Montreal Conferences

Learning Disabilities Association of Quebec
19th International Conference
"Learning Side by Side"
March 17 -19, 1994
Tel: (514) 847-1324
Fax: (514) 281-5187

Springboards 1994
English Language Arts Conference
April 14 -15, 1994

Chronological Conference Listing

1994 Conference on College Composition and Communication
March 16 -19, 1994
Nashville, TN

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
March 19 - 22, 1994
Chicago, IL
Information: ASCD, 1250 N. Pitt St. Alexandria VA 22314. (703) 549-9110

Bard College Institute for Writing and Thinking
"How to Read a Book"
April 15, 1994
Simon's Rock Campus
Great Barrington, MA

Twelfth Annual National Conference: Technology, Reading and Learning Difficulties
April 15 -17, 1994, Baltimore, MD
Information: Diane Frost (510) 222-1249

New York Institute of Technology
7th Annual Conference on Computers, Writing and Literature
April 22, 1994
Old Westbury, NY
Information: Ms. Ann McLaughlin NYIT (516) 686-7557

International Reading Association (IRA)
May 8 - 12, 1994, Toronto, ON
Information: IRA Conference Division 800 Barksdale Rd., P.O. Box 8139 Newark, DE 19714, USA

Canadian Council for Teachers of English and Language Arts (CCTELA)
"Literacy Through the Looking Glass"
May 4 - 7, 1994
Moncton, NB

Inkshed
May 6 - 9, 1994
Moncton, NB
Information: Jim Reither, Doug Vipond, Tel: (506) 452-0644; Fax: (506) 450-9615

The Tenth Annual Computers and Writing Conference
May 20 - 23, 1994
University of Missouri
Columbia, MO

Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC)
Conference '94
May 26 - 28, 1994
Ottawa, ON
Tel: (613) 746-5916

4th Annual Symposium on Literacy and Developmental Disabilities
June 18 -19, 1994
Durham, NC
Information: Amy Staples (919) 966-7486

Whole Language Umbrella
July 14 -17, 1994
San Diego, CA

International Reading Association (IRA) World Congress
July 19 -22, 1994
Buenos Aires, Argentina
Information: Lynn Pyle (800) 336-7323, ext. 219

Media Education: Instructional Imperatives for the Year 2000
NCTE Commission on Media Assembly & National Telemedia Council
July 22 -24, 1994
University of Wisconsin
Information: Karen Neither, NCTE (217) 328-3870, ext. 203

Global Conversations on Language and Literacy
August 15 -17, 1994
Oxford, England
Information: Linda Oldham, NCTE, Tel: (217) 328-3870 ext. 282; Fax: (217) 328-9645

National Conference on Family Literacy
November 3 -5, 1994
Ottawa, ON

American Association for Adult and Continuing Education (AAACE)
November 3 - 5, 1994
Information: AAACE, 1101 Connecticut Avenue N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036. Tel: (202) 429-5131 Fax: (202) 223-4579

1994 Annual Meeting Society for Literature and Science
November 10 - 13, 1994
New Orleans, LA
Information: Richard Nash, Indiana University (812) 855-2930; e-mail: nash@ucs.indiana.edu

National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)
November 14 -16, 1994
Orlando, FL

International Reading Association (IRA)
April 30 - May 4, 1995
Anaheim, CA

Summer Institutes 1994

Summer Institute for Teachers of Literature
"Literature of the Americas: A Critical Perspective, National Council of Teachers of English, College Section
June 5 - 8, 1994
Myrtle Beach, SC

Bard College Summer Workshops
Institute for Writing and Thinking includes: Writing to Learn, Visual Thinking, Exploring Women's Writing Writing Retreat for Teachers, and more
July 11 -15, 1994
Annendale-on-Hudson, NY
(914) 758-7432

Writing Program Administration (WPA)
Summer Workshop
July 25 -28, 1994
Oxford, Mississippi
In connection with
1994 Writing Program Administration (WPA) Annual Conference & ADE Midwestern Summer Seminar
July 28 -31, 1994
Oxford, Mississippi
Information: Ben McClelland, WPA Conference, English Department, U of Mississippi, University MS 38677.

Details on listings available from The Centre for Literacy, (514) 931-8731, local 1415.

continued from p.2

Computers cannot be considered simply as tools in isolation from the social, political and economic contexts where they developed and are used. Technology is hard to use in opposition to the status quo.

3) Prepare English teachers to be classroom researchers.
Critical theory-based understanding needs to be continually informed. The first 40 studies of word-processing produced varied and conflicting results. Teachers are going to have to keep reformulating questions and methodologies and testing the outcomes.

4) Prepare English teachers to be architects of virtual environments.
The architecture of traditional classrooms —lecturn, blackboard, desks — privilege teacher power. The architecture of virtual classrooms is not there *yet*. Teachers do not have to vest it with traditional classroom power relations.

5) Prepare English teachers to be humanists.
We have to convince English teachers to keep their priorities squarely in the humanist tradition*. If we do not, we will guarantee that our students operate only in environments created by engineers and scientists. [It was here that Selfe noted the absence of humanists from the NREN** project.]

*Several humanist projects using new technology were highlighted at the MLA. Among them:

• The Charette Project, Yale: a project in textual research doing computer analysis of a mediaeval manuscript by Chrétien de Troyes. Professor C. Iutti believes the project which involves close collaboration between textualists and technical experts will have a significant impact on the profession establishing principles of analysis usable by others.

• The Shakespeare Interactive Video Project, MIT: an elaborate project to develop all aspects of work linking Shakespeare with electronic technology. Using interactive multimedia, the developers have integrated texts of particular plays with all the filmed performances ever made in any language.xThey have also incorporated photographs, paintings, theatre records, historical commentary, and more, to produce the largest archive for any author in any language. This project will eventually have direct classroom uses.

• No presenters showed any projects directed at training English teachers to use these resources or influence their development.

** NREN= National Research Education Network, or information highway.

Seeking a French equivalent for the word "literacy"

The following note appeared in the Quebec journal, Pédagogie, volume XI, no.4 on December 6, 1993:

Un néologisme

Le mot "literacy" recouvre rarement le mot français "alphabétisation," vu qu'il désigne non seulement la capacité de lire et d'écrire, mais aussi les habiletés plus complexes liées à la production et à la compréhension des textes d'usage courant.

C'est pourquoi on utilise l'expression "analphabètes fonctionnels" pour désigner les personnes qui, tout en sachant lire et écrire, sont incapables de "fonctionner" socialement sur le plan linguistique, par exemple comprendre des instructions simples touchant le maniement d'un appareil ou les renseignements sur une carte routiére.

Pour couvrir le champ sémentique de "literacy", on a donc formé un mot de la même famille, soit LITTÉRATIE (Legendre, 2e édition, p. 797). Il manque encore cependant, un substantif pour désigner la personne qui n'a pas ou manque de littératie, et une épithète pour qualifier cette personne.

Je propose donc la famille de mots suivante:

littératie: compétence en lecture et écriture suffisante pour répondre aux exigences que posent les situations de communication courante;
littératié: se dit de quelqu'un qui a atteint le niveau de littératie;
littératier: faire progresser quelqu'un jusqu'au niveau de la littératie;
illittératié: un individu qui ne possède pas la littératie.

Ouf! (Si vous avez une solution plus élégante, veuillez, s'il vous plait, m'en faire part.)

Harvard University announces summer institutes

Sixteenth Annual Institute for the Management of Lifelong Learning (MLE) June 12 - 24, 1994

The 1994 curriculum will focus on adult learning and development; srategy, planning, and vision; and organizational change and leadership. It is guided by two main questions:

(1) How well positioned is my organization to meet current and future challenges?
(2) How effective is my own repertoire of approaches to leadersl:ip?

Audience: college presidents, vice-presidents for academic affairs, deans , directors of continuing education and adult degree programs; some participants from cultural institutions, community-based programs, professional associations and the military.

Fee: $3300 includes room and board, tuition, case materials and books.
Some financial aid is available. Applications accepted until April 1, 1994.

Adult Learners: Developmental Issues and Challenges June 27 -July 1, 1994

The program will examine critical issues for faculty, counselors, and others who work with adult learners and who want to be more effective at understanding and supporting them.

Audience: faculty, directors of adult learning programs, counselling personnel, others who work directly with adult learners.

Fee: $750 includes tuition, case materials, and books. Special hotel and dormitory packages available.

Information for both institutes: Helen Schwickrath, Adult Learners Institute, 339N Gutman Library, Harvard Graduate School of Education, Cambridge, MA 02138. Tel: (617) 495-3572.

LPQ The Centre for Literacy and Dawson College 1994 Workshops Seminars

Rethinking workplace literacy: Building programs that make sense in a changing workplace

Leader: Sondra Stein, National Institute for Literacy, Washington, D.C.
Date: Thursday, April 7, 1994
Time: 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

POSTPONED TO FALL 1994

Virtual Realities: From the concrete to the barely Imaginable

Leader: Stephen Marcus, University of California,
Date: Friday, April 22, 1994
Time: 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Designing brief writing/thinking assignments across the disciplines

Leader: John Bean, Seattle University.
Date: Friday, May 27, 1994
Time: 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

For information, Catherine Duncan, (514) 931-8731, local 1415.
FAX (514) 931-5181.

National Adult Literacy Database (NALD)

NALD is a database and bulletin board service for literacy practitioners and researchers across Canada. With listings of more than 5000 literacy programs/projects and services, NALD can provide directories and contact names to anyone setting up new programs or investigating practices. It can also set up electronic conferencing on request. For information on how you or your organization can benefit from NALD: Tamara Ilersich, NALD, c/o Fanshawe College, London Ontario, Tel. (519) 452-4446; fax (519) 451-8831.

Literacy Partners of Quebec announce workshops:
Working with learning-disabled adults

LPQ

Presenter: Patricia Hatt,
North York Board of Education
Date: April 27, 1994
Time: 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Place: Dawson College
Fee: $35.00 (includes materials and lunch)
Pat will also present workshops in Sherbrooke, Quebec City, and the Gaspé.
For dates, details: Isa Helfield, (514) 931-8731, local 1413.

Call for participants:
Women writing literacy curriculum

CCLOW is a national feminist organization concerned with learning opportunities for women and the empowerment of women. They have been funded by the National Literacy Secretariat to publish a book of instructional material for use at the literacy level, material that is about women's issues and that accommodates women's ways of learning. they will be choosing 15 women from across Canada to particpate in this project.

If you are a literacy/ABE/ESL instructor who is always creating new materials because you are not pleased with what you find or are given; if you are sensitive to different ways of learning, particularly women's ways; if you try to provide your studnts with a perspetcive on women that is concerned with equal opportunities and equal status for woman, you may want to apply to work on this project.

DEADLINE FOR APPLICATIONS: MARCH 23, 1994

N.B. the first meeting of the project team will be held in Banff, AB, June 5 -7, 1994. All members must be available for that meeting.

For a detailed description of the project and the expectations, contact: Aisla Thompson, CCLOW, 47 Main Street, Toronto, ON, M4E 2V6, Tel: (416) 699-1909; fax: (416) 699-2145.

COMING IN MARCH 1994

The power of woman positive literacy work

Three books based on a 3-year research action project carried out by the Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women and funded by the National Literacy Secretariat.

The research question was: What happens when some women decide to do something they define as woman-positive in their adult literacy program?

To order: CCLOW, 47 Main Street, Toronto, ON, M4E 2V6. Tel: (416) 699-1909; Fax:(416) 699-2145.

The Centre for Literacy 1994 Summer Institute

presents:

Workforce Education: Focus on Evaluation

ABC CANADA

June 27 -30, 1994
Toronto, ON

Facilitators:
Sue Folinsbee, Linda Shohet

Guest presenter:
Sheryl Gowen

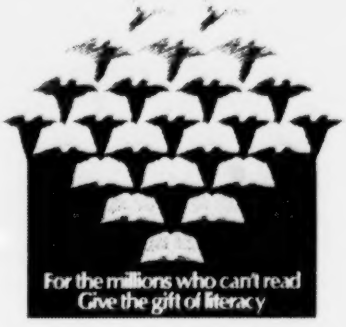
Details available March 1994

IF YOU CAN'T SEE IT HOW CAN YOU READ IT?

Good vision and literacy – there's a connection

Vision awareness week March 6 to 12, 1994 Peter Gzowski Honorary Chairman

THE CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF OPTOMETRISTS



Canadian Give the Gift of Literacy Foundation 1994 grants

Funding is available to non-profit groups in the form of SEED GRANTS (up to $2500) for the development and research of new publications and

PRODUCTION GRANTS (up to $5000) for the completion of more thoroughly formed projects.

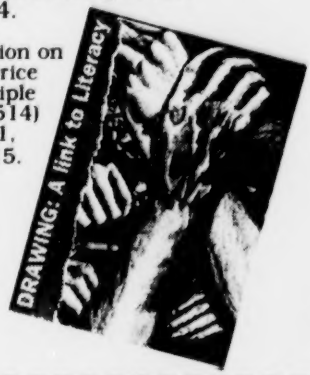
Deadline: June 30, 1994

Information: Canadian Give the Gift of Literacy Foundation, 35 Spadina Road, Toronto, ON M5R 2S9, Tel: (416) 975-9366, Fax: (416) 975-1839.

Publications

DRAWING: A link to Literacy
Stunning drawings and moving texts on social and personal issues that touch us all – war, race, love, AIDS, pollution – produced by college students. To order a copy send a cheque for $10.00 plus $3.00 shipping & handling plus applicable sales tax(es) in Canada. Cheque is payable to The Centre for Literacy, 3040 Sherbrooke Street West, Montreal, Quebec, H3Z 1A4.

Information on special price for multiple copies: (514) 931-8731, local 1415.



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VOL 3 No. 4 WINTER 1994

Media FOCUS

THE CENTRE FOR LITERACY

Fantasy becomes reality — virtual reality

What is real about the inevitability of a technology which will enable us to experience worlds which could previously only have been imagined? Virtually everything, according to Hal Thwaites of the Communication Studies Department at Concordia University. Thwaites, who teaches courses in communication, computers, information design and three-dimensional technologies and is director of 3DMT, facilitated a session* recently on virtual reality. It was open to teachers and interested members of the public.

It was not his intention to promote or condemn virtual reality (VR), but to provide a better sense of what it is all about. He also stressed its implications for education, emphasizing that despite resistance and anxieties from some educators and parents, it simply will not go away.

From yesterday to tomorrow

In contrast to the elaborate technology of VR which conjures up notions of a futuristic world, Thwaites' presentation was comparatively "low tech." He used slides, a video and an overhead projector to illustrate that, in fact, the concept of VR is not new at all. Virtual reality existed centuries ago when drawings on cave walls were tribal representations of the real game hunters were going to hunt. This is VR—a means of creating for viewers a sense of reality in an another environment. To further illustrate that old techniques are still used today, Thwaites traced the evolution of the virtual image by referring to early dioramas in France which were elaborate, ornate creations in large, round environments. The sense of "roundness" and space was repeated more recently in movies such as Expo '67's 360' Theatre and 3-D, the forerunner of IMAX.

Hal Thwaites in VR gear

Dimensions of VR

Thwaites used a series of overhead diagrams to illustrate the complexity and range of technology

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

IN THIS ISSUE

Lessons for the elementary classroom **Page 6**

Review of David Buckingham's *Children Talking Television* **Page 9**

Media Focus

is a supplement to **Literacy Across the Curriculum** published four times a year by **The Centre for Literacy, Inc.**
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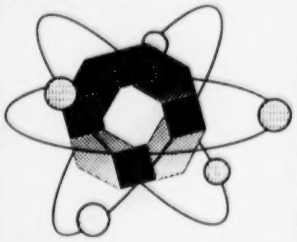
The Centre for Literacy/Le Centre d'Alphabétisation is a resource centre and teacher-training project designed to provide training, research, and information services which promote and link the advancement of literacy in the schools, the workplace and the community. The Centre gratefully acknowledges the support of the National Literacy Secretariat, Human Resources and Labour Canada and Dawson College.



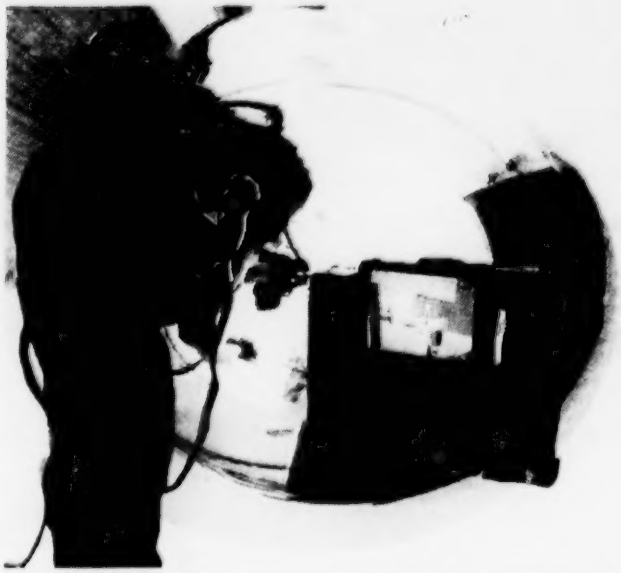
Literacy for the 21st century
Literacy encompasses a complex set of abilities to understand and use the dominant symbol systems of a culture for personal and community development. In a technological society, the concept of literacy is expanding to include the media and electronic text, in addition to alphabetic and number systems. These abilities vary in different social and cultural contexts according to need and demand. Individuals must be given life-long learning opportunities to move along a continuum that includes the reading and writing, critical understanding, and decision-making abilities they need in their community.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

and "gear" used to experience VR. These include masks, sensors, and a data glove calibrated according to how the wearer's hand moves. Taken to the extreme, the equipment includes a highly sophisticated motion platform, tactile feedback and speech recognition apparatus.

Thwaites introduced the complexities of VR by explaining that there are three variables to its dimensions.

The first involves the user's level of control. In a situation which does not include VR, the student and/or teacher is in complete control. This changes somewhat when VR and Artifical Intelligence (AI) are combined; in this situation, the technologies react to the user's input or database.



Finally, a VR system alone assumes a level of control which excludes the instructor or learner.

The next dimension of VR is related to the nature of reality and falls into three categories. The first are computer-mediated systems, such as telerobotics and telepresence. The next category makes replications of reality possible, but not actual. The last allows for alternate realities whose physical laws can be modified, suspended or contradicted by the user, thus becoming experimental scenarios.

The third dimension involves the naturalness of the interaction which changes with the technology. A situation in which the user's motion

BOX 1

Definitions

Virtual: being in essence or effect, but not in fact;
Reality: a real event, entity or state of affairs

Technologies

•Virtual reality
- a form of human computer interface characterized by an environment simulation controlled only in part by the user.
- requires hardware and software.
- provides a sense of: inclusive immersion, navigation, manipulation.

•Artificial reality
- an interactive environment that emphasizes unencumbered full body, multisensory participation in computer events.
- "graphic worlds that people can enter from different places to interface with each other and graphic creatures" (see Myron Krueger, 1991)

•Cyberspace
- a place where the human nervous system and mechanical-electronic communications and a computation system are linked.
- originated with the work of William Gibson.

is not equal to the natural physical motion is illustrated by a computer mouse on a desktop. Navigation via computer "clothing" becomes somewhat more interactive and requires the use of equipment like eyephones and data gloves which enable the user to experience "walking", "flying" or "falling" sensations. Natural body movements without electronics are, of course, the ultimate in interaction.

VR and education

Definitions are fundamental to what Thwaites identified as a discussion of concept vs technology which marks the battleground. If "battleground" is too extreme a word to describe the discussion, the term, debate would certainly be appropriate. Debate centres around the technologies which Thwaites defined specifically. [See BOX1]

Impact of VR on education: Teachers as *knowledge navigators.*

History has shown that the introduction of any new technology impacts strongly on education, and Thwaites stressed that VR will be no exception. By its very nature, it will create a shift in learning from printed symbols to simulations. To respond to this shift, text-based curriculum materials will need to move towards becoming image and symbol based. As a result, there will be a shift from textbook abstractions to experiential learning in naturalistic settings.

Changes in learning situations have often been problematic since they require changes in teaching methods. VR will likely underscore these problems. To accommodate VR and an increasingly high technology profile in schools, the role of teachers will need to change as they become *knowledge navigators.* [See BOX 2]

Thwaites concluded his presentation with a reminder that as with any technology, VR comes with an on/off switch, regardless of the degree of sophistication. This message is crucial, especially for educators and parents who feel powerless at the hands of the information age and the technologies it promises.

* *On November 16, 1993, Academic Alliance session, hosted by the Association of Teachers of English Teachers of Quebec (ATEQ) and The Centre for Literacy.*

Due to limited time and great audience interest, many comments and questions could not be addressed on November 16. Thwaites will return to continue the discussion on February 28.

Note: The Media Education Journal, (Issue 15, Winter, 1993) contains an article entitled, "Virtuality Reality: Personalised Utopia or a New Cyberia?" written by Alan McCorquodale. This issue of the Journal i s available at The Centre for Literacy.

BOX 2

Some potential applications of information design in a curriculum:

- Virtual physics lab
- Planetary explorations
- History - virtual archeology
- Biology - the "virtual frog"
- Chemistry - exploring molecules
- Virtual windtunnel
- Mathematical modelling

Possible goals for educators

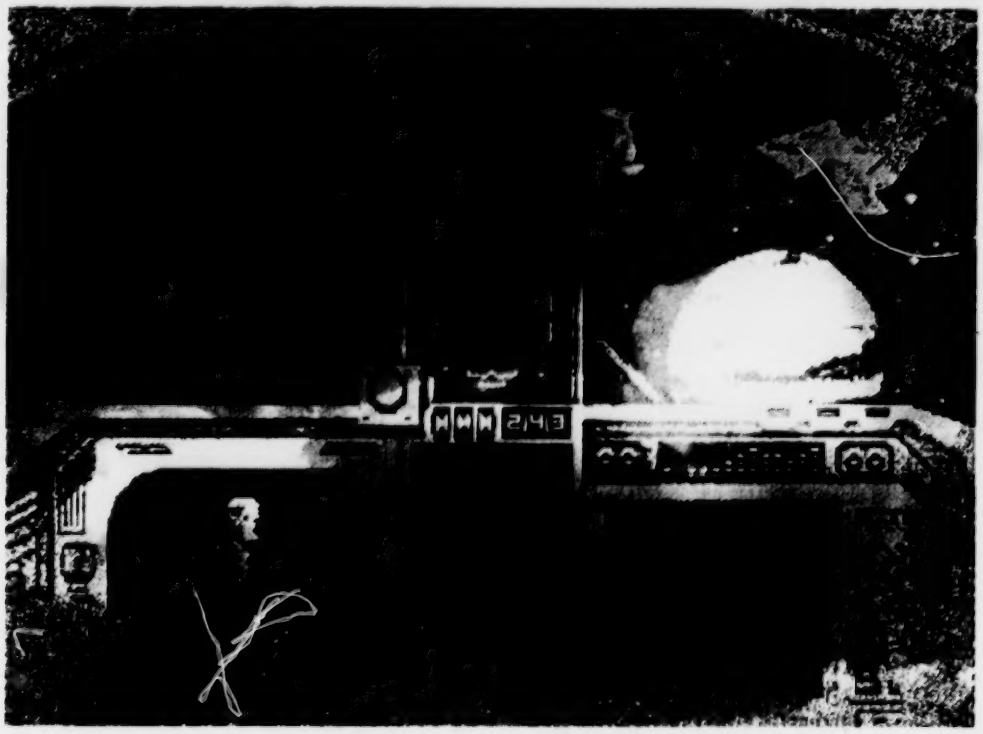
- Develop techniques for teaching operational, visual, figurative and theoretical skills.
- Allow students to experiment and research and to learn through their own processes of discovery.
- Develop the student's information culture.
- Create stimulae actively encouraging cognitive processes.
- Train specialists in the use of 3-D visual information.
- Provide a modelling tool for studying objects, processes and phenomena which do not exist in reality.

Potential human impact of virtual reality

- **Enhancement of**
  - **value of informational mobility.**
  - **experimental entertainment and escapism.**
- **Cushioning of**
  - **conflict between biological and informational time.**

- Substitution for:
  - values of silence solitude.
  - joy of intimate personal and perceptual space.
- Cause of:
  - withdrawal and depression due to the temporality of VR.
  - stress and fear of the vast dimensions, causing technophobia.
  - instability when the real world returns.
  - addiction and overuse, as in the case of video games.

Follow the fibre-optic-lined road



As words like "information highway" and "communicopia" are being coined, the notion of technology continues to provoke both anxiety and excitement. Already, nations are racing to outdo one another as they create "information superhighways." Midst the frenzy, however, is the fact that no universal definition of any of these terms has yet been established. There is also great debate about whether or not these technologies will, in fact, come about soon enough to be realities for this generation of users.

While the highways are not well travelled, they are being paved. Visions of the future are being created by experts in many fields. Governments are developing strategies to create their country's high-speed communication network; academic is attempting to define its role; and mergers abound as multi-nationals court one another for a bigger piece of the communications pie. The real experts however, have already discovered that possibility has become reality—virtual reality. Many of our young people are well on their way to finding the highway—super or otherwise. What follows is an unedited excerpt exactly as it was prepared by four first-year Management students at McGill University. Jon, Asim, Joanne, and Linda chose "Virtual Reality: An Introduction" as the topic of their group report for Effective Written Communication, a required course.

The excerpt is interesting not only because it informs us about VR and entertainment, but also because it highlights the gap between what policy makers, educators and parents tbelieve is happening in our media society and what is actually happening. It is a reminder that if we want to know more about tomorrow's technology today, we need only to do what media education teachers have been doing for years. Ask a student. [JB]

Entertainment: The virtual reality way

Considering that video games are a global money-making machine, it is not surprising that virtual reality is popular in the arcades. In the United States, video games rake in $5.3 billion dollars a year. Globally, game revenues exceed $10 billion dollars and a single hit, like *Sonic The Hegehog* and *Mortal Kombat*, can top $500 million.

Virtual reality has made video games more exciting. Video games of the past simply meant using a control panel and watching the results on the screen. In contrast, virtual reality games, which are now accessible all around the world, give the person playing the game an out-of-body and an out-of-mind experience; these games allow the player to not only see and hear but also to touch, feel and interact with objects in the game.

With the use of virtual reality (and $4 to $30 to spend), players can journey to far-off places and become people or objects beyond their wildest dreams. *Dactyl Nightmare*, which has up to 250 locations, transports players into the past to stalk opponents and dodge pterodactyls. *ASI* in Las Vegas taks players on a mission in space. In *Battletech*, located in Chicago and Tokyo, players become massive robots and attempt to vaporize eveything in their path. In *Virtual Adventures*, by Iwerks Entertainment, players

journey underwater to rescue some rare eggs hatched by the Loch Ness monster.

Big companies, such as AT&T and Paramount, also want a piece of the virtual reality action. Technological advancements have given these companies the means to reshape various entertainment mediums into video-game-like formats; in the future, television will be a two-way interactive environment in which the viewer will no longer simply watch the shows or play the video games from the outside, but will also be able to enjoy and interact. (Jennifer, our fictional friend from the future, will help us to understand what exactly a two-way interactive television environment would be like). Imagine a future with 3-dimensional television shows where the characters seem as large and as real as life; or imagine virtual game shows, which some companies predict as early as 1996, where you are the contestant. In the future, entertainment will mean immersing ourselves in a three-dimensional world of illusion.

Hollywood Executives and video-game programmers are dreaming up ways of making interactive movies. These movies would allow a viewer to either control the actions of the character in the movie or enter the environment (a "virtual reality") and become the characters themselves. Similar to the storyline of *The Last Action Hero*, the viewer would be able to enjoy the action alongside his or her favorite hero. Or, imagine being the detective in a mystery movie; you would have the ability to personally track down the "bad guy" by investigating the crime scene and interviewing the suspects yourself.

To make the dream of interactive movies a reality, an assortment of companies, such as Nintendo, Sega, Atari and 3DO are designing video game systems that will combine the visual poser of a Hollywood movie with the interactivity of a video game. 3DO, a new company similar to Sega and Nintendo was the first to release such a machine a month ago, which has twice the amount of power of Sega's Genesis and Super Nintendo and about equal to the power of an arcade-sized video game.

But the other companies are close on 3DO's tail; Atari, Sega and Nintendo each have machines similar to 3DO's in development. In addition, Nintendo announced plans of a gaming machine with approximately twice the amount of power of Genesis and Super Nintendo combined! These machines will have games which have graphics, sound and game-play that are four times as good as the games which are presently on the market. If you thought that Nintendo's *Street Fighter II* and Sega's *Aladdin* were good games, just wait and see what the future will hold! In view of technological advancements and the raw power that these new entertainment machines are boasting, virtual reality in the home will soon be a reality.

Virtual amusement parks, where players anywhere in the world can compete with other players, are also being created by companies in the entertainment industry. Sega and AT&T have designed a cartridge, called the *Edge 16*, which enables Sega Genesis owners to compete with similarly equipped players over ordinary telephone lines. Other networks are for both the young and the old. Computer-users can call up the *Imagi/Nation* Network to play against or along-side other computer-users in everything from cards to fantasy-role-playing games.

For the classroom

Because so little exists in curriculum for media education at the primary and elementary levels of Canadian schools, there is a great need to share what has been developed in other countries. The following lessons, developed by Evelyn Crosbie, Head Teacher at Stenhousemuir Primary School, are reprinted with the permission of The Media Education Journal, Issue 13, Winter, 1992, and can be easily adapted for use in Canadian classrooms. Lessons have been reprinted in their original form at the request of the editor of MEJ.

Advertising in Primary Schools

1 Context: Environmental Education
Theme Work: Shopping

From a general discussion with children, the subject of buying what we need and buying what we would like should arise.

Aims:

- To identify category - advert.
- To identify the purpose of adverts.
- To identify audience.
- To identify codes/conventions which make it memorable.

Objectives:

- That the children will differentiate adverts from other media forms.
- That they will be able to name the type of product being advertised.
- That they will be able to match adverts to broad bands of audience.
- That they appreciate the use of jingles/catchphrases which make adverts memorable and more likely to influence our choice when shopping.

Development (Four phases):

1

Using a selection of adverts and snips from these other television categories discuss what kind of televisions this is a film/a cartoon/an advert/the news.

a) Find the advert. Make simple choice advert/not an advert.

Use coloured counters in a tub to record - **red** (ads) **blue** (others)

b) Sort into sets. Record how many in each category. (If children are at that level, i.e. They can readily identify all four types.)

2

Now look only at the adverts.

Discuss – How did we know that they were adverts?

Can we tell what was being sold?

3

Do we know who was supposed to buy these products?

Mums, Dads, Children, Whole Family etc.

4

Discard the material used and ask the children to recall any TV adverts they know.

How did you remember that one music, was it funny etc?

Do you or your family have any of these things at home?

Do you think the advert helped you to decide what to buy?

(Do each phase as often as necessary until the concept is established. It may be immediate or it may take a few weeks to develop).

2 Context: Environmental Education
Theme Work: My Body

As part of the theme the children will be studying the five senses.

Aims:

- To create an awareness of how the senses are used in advertising, and that only certain senses can be used by the different media.
- To identify which senses are being used in specific adverts.
- To evaluate and comment on effective use of senses in adverts.
- *To identify target audience more specifically than at the early stages.*

Objectives:

- That the children will be able to name the appropriate senses used in the different media.
- That they will begin to appreciate the creation of image and that visual impact is the greatest persuader in advertising.
- That they will demonstrate understanding of audience by identifying which group of consumers an advert holds most appeal for, when it should be scheduled on television, in which magazines, newspapers etc. it should be placed.

Development (Four phases):

1

Using adverts from television, radio, newspapers, magazines - discuss which senses we use in interpreting them.

2

Now look at the adverts on television.

a) Listen to adverts without sound.

b) Look at adverts without sound.

c) View as intended with both.

Discuss the impact each time. Establish the very strong influence when appropriate music is used with the image. Discuss the music and the target audience.

3

Look now at advertising in the other media forms. How do they compensate? Taste and smell are used by giving free samples of certain food. What about the sense of touch? Could free-trial offers be considered in this area? If you have something in your home that you can touch would you be more likely to want to keep it?

4

It would be worthwhile doing a novel-study of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* at this point as Willie Wonka experimented with breaking conventions in advertising

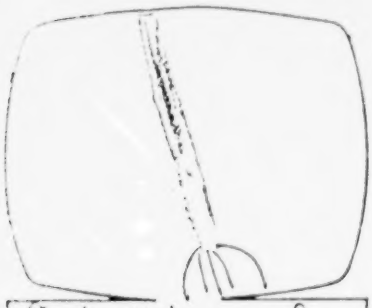
CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

Scott

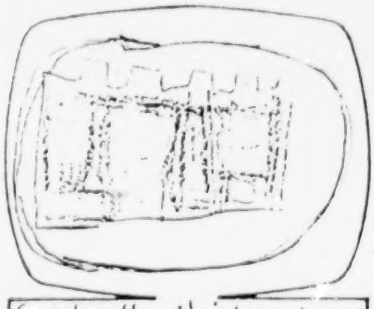
As part of the pilot work on the SFC's "Main Street" package, a primary 2 pupil produced the work below. The activity was from Main Street Shops, and the children had to plan a TV advert. The children chose their own story theme and produced, and then storyboarded the ad.

Thanks to Wilma Shanks of Victoria Primary School, Falkirk

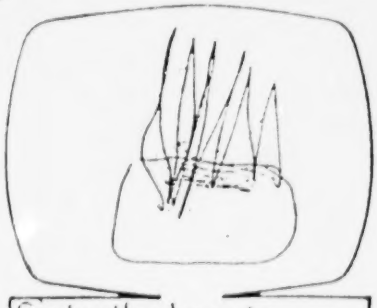
Fairytale hand cream.



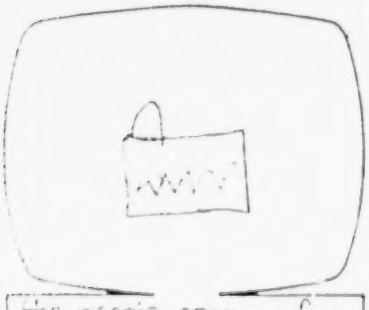
Cinderella's mop for cleaning floor.



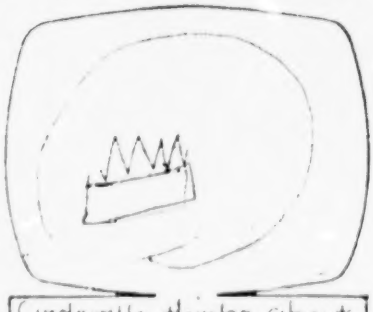
Cinderella thinks about the prince in his castle



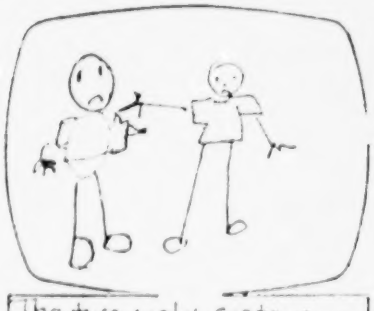
Cinderella has to clean the fire.



She needs cream for her sore hands.

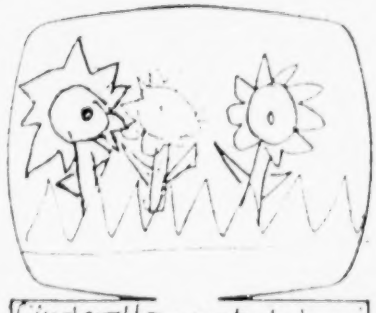


Cinderella thinks about the prince's crown

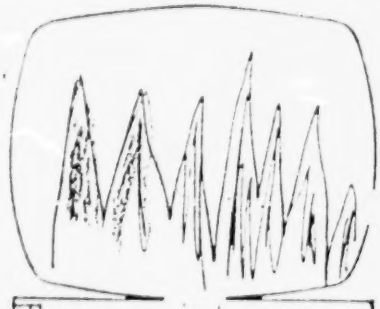


The two ugly sisters having an argument

Cinderella thinks about the prince



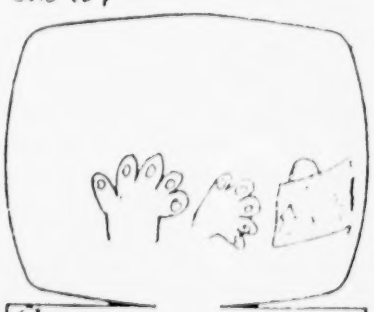
Cinderella wanted to pick flowers but couldn't because of her sore hands.



The grass is long now because she couldn't cut it.

The flower is all bent now.

Then she has a nice garden.



She puts on her cream.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

and used all five senses to great effect — eg.
Television Chocolate, you could sample chocolate from the television etc.
(Discuss each phase as often as necessary to develop the concept.)

Context: Environmental Education
Theme Work: Trading
As part of the theme the children will be studying the importing/exporting of cars. It would be appropriate to look at this fiercely competitive market in closer detail and examine the range of advertising strategies and the symbolism and image of particular cars conveyed through the mass media.

Magazine Adverts
Aims:
- To create an awareness of the use of colour, subject, background and texts in magazine adverts.
- To draw the attention to the relationship between these individual components.
- To demonstrate that car magazine adverts are targeted through a variety of devices at particular AUDIENCES
- To read the 'hidden meaning' behind the stated captions.
- To identify STEREOTYPICAL REPRESENTATION in car adverts.

Objectives:
- That the children will be able to identify the target audience for specific advertisements.
- That they they will be able to recognise and name the components used to appeal to that audience.
- That they will be able to discuss the image created by particular advertisements.
- That they will be able to re-write captions to state specific message rather than the actual words written.
- That they can see where misrepresentation and stereotypes occur and argue against them.

Development:
Show the children the caption only and discuss the type of product they think is being advertised.
Show captions and background.
Ask the children to describe what they see—colours, lack of people, terrain.
Add the company logo - Can anyone identify the product being advertised?
Add the car. Refer again to the caption, point out the key word.
What kind of person would want this car?
In what kind of publication would this article appear?
Go through various magazines and make a montage of car adverts with original and re-written captions.

News & Notes

Television Violence: Fraying Our Social Fabric, June 1993, a Report of the Standing Committee of Communications and Culture; and *Agenda For Youth*, January, 1993, a Report of the Liberal Senate and House of Commons Committee on Youth, are available at The Centre for Literacy. Both are bilingual publications.

Conferences and workshops

"The Media File: Media, Culture and Classroom"
Springboards '94
Date: Thursday, April 14, 1994
Time: 1:00 - 3:30
Place: McGill University
Information: Tel. (514) 620-7680

"Virtual realities: From the concrete to the barely imaginable"
The Centre for Literacy
Date: Friday, April 22, 1994.
Time: 9 a.m. to 4 p.m
Place:Dawson College .
Presenter: Steven Marcus, University of California, Santa Barbara.
A workshop for anyone interested in the application of new technologies in the classroom.
Information: (514) 931-8731 Local. 1415 .

2nd Annual Student Media Showcase
Date: Thursday, April 28, 1994
Place: McGill University
An event for high school students sponsored by The Association for Media Education of Quebec, McGill University, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, National Film Board of Canada and Radio-Quebec.
Registration: $15.00
Information: Maureen Baron, Tel. (514) 283-9461; Fax (514) 496-2573; Lee Rother, Tel. (514) 491-1000; Fax (514) 682-5950

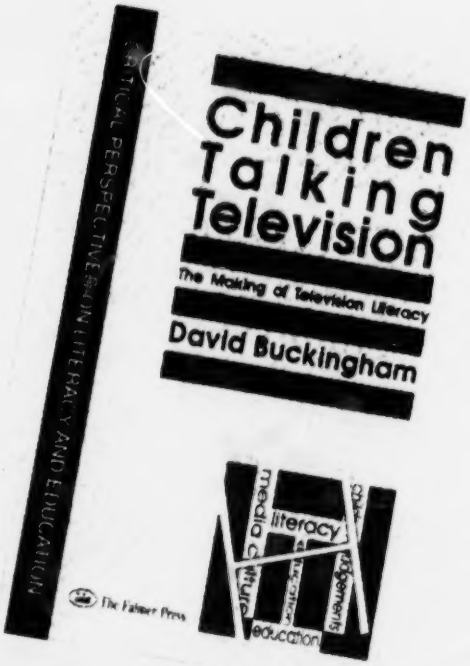
McGill University Graduate Summer Institute '94
Language Culture and Schooling
July 4 - 29, 1994
Session 1: July 4 - 15. Education and Social Issues: Race, Identity & Critical Pedagogy *or* Media Education: Audience Research and Classroom Practice.
Session 2: July 18 - 29. Biographical Methods in Qualitative Research in Education *or* Language Arts: Reflecting the Canadian Mosaic
Instructors: Henry Giroux, Pennsylvania State University; Judith Slaughter, McGill University; Andrea L. Cole, O.I.S.E; and J. Gary Knowles, University of Michigan; David Buckingham, University of London.
Note: Applicants must meet prerequisites for graduate admission to the Department of Curriculum and Instruction.
Application deadline: May 1.

Information: Dr. Claudia Mitchell, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, Faculty of Education, McGill University, 3700 McTavish St., Montreal, Quebec, H3A 1Y2 Phone.(514) 398-4526; Fax (514) 398-4529.

Reviews

Children Talking Television: The Making of Television Literacy

David Buckingham. The Falmer Press (London, England, 1993) 297 pp.



What do Neil Postman, Marie Winn and Prince Charles have in common? Great anxiety about film, television and videos and a real distrust about their effects on children. So we learn from David Buckingham's newest book, ***Children Talking Television,*** in which he draws on his recent research at the University of London's Institute of Education.

Buckingham calls into question much of the Prince's criticism and accusations of tv's use of gratuitous violence, as well as contentions by Postman and Winn that the medium is a negative influence on children's behaviour and consciousness. Buckingham urges researchers, parents and educators to talk to children. Place more emphasis on children's perspectives and responses to the programs they watch. He stresses the importance of children's talk about tv, alerting readers to the significance and influence of factors such as gender, social class and ethnic background in any discussion of the topic.

Buckingham's book is divided into three parts, the first raising various issues which include the ways of funding research into media studies. The author rejects the suggestion that the issue of the media is a psychological one, for he sees it as a much broader field and points to the need to consider cultural and social environments as well. To widen the discussion, he explores the meaning of "literacy" as it is applied to tv and other technologies, offering several definitions—or re-definitions—of the term. He warns against accepting one simple definition and emphasizes that there are complex theoretical questions to be considered. He makes a compelling case for future research into tv literacy to proceed in a more critical manner which will address individual and social issues, and urges media studies enthusiasts not to be discouraged by the fact that such an approach may well prove to be problematic.

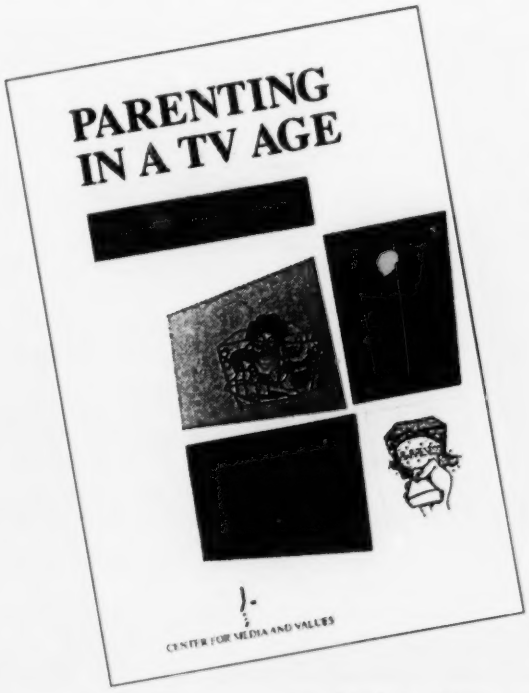
In Part Two, subtitled *Making Sense of Television Talk*, Buckingham rejects the conclusion that tv is a passive medium and argues that it is a social activitiy which provides fertile ground for valuable discourse. He reassesses previous research (his own included) and questions some of it for its tendancy to be too empirical. In this section, he describes a project he conducted in 1989 with groups of London school children and includes transcripts of discussions with them, accompanied by commentaries which touch on various aspects of the discussions. Although many of the comments are specific to British tv, there are some references which will be familiar to North American readers.

Part Three deals with elements of tv literacy. It explores aspects of the medium including discussions of categories and genre of programming. Once again, Buckingham includes transcripts of interviews with young viewers in his continuing attempt to shape future research models. In the final section of the book, the author emphasizes the importance of the audience and refers to the strong influence of what John Fiske describes as the "oral culture" which defines meanings of tv. Buckingham concludes with some sobering thoughts on critical discourse and children's understanding of tv as a popular theme of much recent media studies research.

Children Talking Television is not for readers who are looking for a quick fix to the growing number of questions surrounding media studies. In fact, one of the book's most obvious characteristics is that it raises and underscores new issues. In it, Buckingham reminds us that we have gone beyond the "pioneering" days of research. We now know that the issues are complex and there are no easy answers, and this is what must motivate us to continue in our efforts to promote media literacy. (JB)

Parenting in a TV Age

A Media Literacy Workshop Kit on Children and Televison
produced by The Center for Media and Values, Los Angeles, CA.



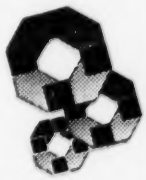
Another in a series of Workshop Kits *Parenting in a TV Age* is somewhat different from the earlier*TV ALERT: A Wake-up Guide for Televison Literacy* (reviewed in *Media Focus*, Summer, 1993) in that the former is addressed specifically to parents. However, the two are quite similar in format.

Parenting in a TV Age includes a leader's guide for four parent workshops including sample lesson plans and handout masters to reproduce; *Making the Media Work For You*, a four page resource containing suggestions for use at home; *Children and Television: Growing up in a Media Age*, a magazine with essays on the subject; and *From Awareness to Action: Media Literacy for the 90's*, a summary of the basic elements of media literacy education.
The Kit is recommended for use by home and school organizations, churches or synagogues, community centers as well as other groups. The first workshop introduces some basic key concepts about tv and the remaining three deal with commercials, violence and action for change.

Leaders will welcome the easy-to-use Leader's Guide which clearly establishes objectives, preparation and method for each session— even down to suggested number of minutes to devote to each portion of the session. This means that group leaders need not be "experts" in the field.

Cost: U.S. $21.95/$25.95
Information: Center for Media and Values, 1962 Shenandoah St., Los Angeles, CA., 90034 Tel. (310) 559-2944 Fax (310) 559-2944

The Centre for Literacy announces its annual June conference



Technology, Media, Literacy: Impact on Society and Education

Speakers:
Richard Lanham, UCLA, author of *The Electonic Word*
Robert Kubey, Rutgers, co-author of *Television and the Quality of Life*
Eric McLuhan, co-author of *Laws of Media*
Michel Pichette, UQAM

Tuesday, Wednesday, June 22, 23, 1994
Details available in March.

Information:
(514) 931-8731, local 1415
INTERNET: cduncan@dawsoncollege.qc.ca.

Media literacy parent materials and the community: A comment

While many of the materials designed for parents who wish to participate in their children's media education are useful for some, they exclude others for whom they may not be as practical. For example, the objectives and the design of existing materials assume that all parents can, and will, attend training sessions. Yet this is not always the case; many parents simply are unable to take advantage of what currently exists. The social reality is that in many households, a number of variables inhibit parents' freedom and ability to influence their children's tv-viewing habits. These include work schedules, financial stresses, cultural differences and some parents' low to non-existent levels of literacy.

With this reality in mind, media literacy enthusiasts and community-based organizations will need to work closely to create a wider range of media education resource materials to meet the needs of all communities and families. They may do this by assessing the needs of their own community, working to develop relevant programs and providing accessiblity to these programs. It is not necessarily a simple project, but one which is crucial. Media literacy, like all literacies, is a right which should be accessible to all. (JB)